

**Contested Contexts:
The articulation of critically-oriented business
and management schools in the UK**

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the contexts that make possible contested articulations of critically-oriented business and management schools in the UK. Drawing on British cultural studies, the theoretical framework builds on the concept of articulation understood as an overdetermined, non-necessary correspondence between elements of the social totality. Any articulation is an inherently unstable unity that, in a radical contextualist approach, acquires its temporary local meanings in mutual contradistinction to various contexts. Based on my empirical research, I provide an example of how the meaning of criticality gets contextually negotiated at a particular school through the performative re-iteration of boundaries that organize the local contexts. The 14-month ethnographic fieldwork underpinning this research at a school of business and management in the UK included participant observation, interviews with full-time staff members, university managers and third-year undergraduate students, and analysis of relevant documents. This was complemented by interviews done with staff members at further two schools. The analysis is underpinned by a deconstructive approach to disentangle how contexts come together in the institution of critically-oriented schools. The research shows that the conditions of possibility for criticality emerge through the antagonistic local institutional history of the main site and its mother university but this discourse of criticality is continually challenged inside the school. With regard to the context of the scholarly field of critical management studies, the research finds that repeated calls for engagement actually reinforce the idea of critique as a largely academic exercise and a similar separation is found with regard to educational content and pedagogic method. The thesis concludes by suggesting possible rearticulations, new routes of political engagement, along the lines of embodied resistance and performative education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Prologue

The links between education and critique have been fundamental to my experiences of studying, doing, and teaching organizing during the past 16 years. I started my studies at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration in Hungary in 2000. An economist by degree as the result of a 5-year master's education, my university years saw me choose a major in Management and Organization, and then specialize in Human Resource Management. I thought that was a good choice as I cared about people, their thoughts and feelings, the “soft” side of management. It took about 20 minutes of the first specialized seminar for our lecturer to shatter that idea. “If you are here because you think Human Resource Management is about humans, you are at the wrong place”, I remember her saying, “HRM is not about people, it is about systems”. In a sense, and this thesis attests to that, I am still looking to find where humans fit into management and its education.

By the time I graduated, the university was renamed Corvinus University of Budapest in 2004 using the adopted name of who is widely considered one of the greatest kings of Hungary, King Matthias Corvinus, whose Renaissance court and Italian linkages made him famous Europe-wide as a patron of art and knowledge. In folk stories, Matthias is often depicted as a king who mingles with the plebs in disguise to find out how they live and to do good. Oddly, with the feudal system fairly secure, he was remembered as someone who would care about common people, unlike the lecturer of the early-2000s. Renaming is of course a symbolic strategy, a seemingly easy way to influence discourse, and it was a rather common experience in Hungary after the fall of the socialist regime in 1989. Thus, it should not be surprising that in 1990 the prefix of that other figure who is remembered for caring about common people, Karl Marx, was dropped from the name of the university. Surprisingly, his statue survived in the University's main hall up until 2014 but his ideas were

purged from the curriculum for glossy-eyed expectations about western market-based capitalism in the early-1990s.

There has been however a relatively small group of students who not only staged a makeshift exhibition to draw attention to why the statue should be kept in place but have been engaged in keeping Marx's legacy alive at the University while keeping up with the cutting edge of social science. Invariably described as a group of "lefties", "queers", and "potheads" – with the elements of truth being embraced to the point of obliterating the intended insult – the College for Social Theory since 1981 has considered its goal to educate students in topics that the ~~Karl-Marx~~ University of Economics did not offer. Student members, and I gladly admit that I was one of them, would organize courses in political economy, postmodern philosophy, critical theory, urban sociology, and so on either self-taught, or led by a renowned local scholar. Beyond the intellectual education, we would live together, learn, read, cook, do repairs, practice basic democracy, and so on. Like in a fraternity, some in England have told me. Clearly not, I would rush to correct them, that is both sexist and elitist – more like a commune. Not only is this thesis built on the theoretical foundations I got there, but it has also been driven, as I came to realize three years into my PhD, by the will to understand how education can be organized differently.

Thirteen years ago in Hungary it was not easy to get access to the latest academic literature (and often it still is not). Having written a minor thesis in my third year on Foucault and HRM, I found myself thinking that someone somewhere in the world must have already connected management and organization studies (my major) and gender studies (my minor) in a way that went beyond simple statistics. Lacking a cutting edge library but equipped with internet connection, one of the few resources accessible at the time that was not hidden behind a paywall turned out to be an open access journal called *ephemera*.¹ Finding it opened up the mesmerizing world of critical management scholarship. After graduation I spent the next six years teaching around 20 hours a week at a business school in Budapest. When it became clear that I wanted to do a PhD, these three themes converged in a broad question of whether the organization of life in the College, the scholarship of critical management studies, and teaching in business schools could be merged in some way. Could there be a business school that is critical? And if there is one, what is it like?

¹ It seems beyond coincidental that I have done my PhD at the institution that played such a crucial role in the founding of this journal. The first article I read was "Fucking Management: Queer, Theory and Reflexivity" by Martin Parker (2001) who happens to be one of my supervisors. Still, let me reassure you, much of this is genuine coincidence. It is precisely this combination of a structured coincidence that this thesis is about.

1.2. What really goes on

Critique has not been alien to business and management schools over recent years. They have often been scapegoated for the failures of business. While some accused them of churning out MBA graduates instead of creative managers (Mintzberg, 2004) and teaching bad management theories that create immoral business people (Ghoshal, 2005), others mourned their lost professional ethos (Khurana, 2007; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). After the recent financial crisis, the ways in which the management-educated business elite furthered an uncontrollable managerialism, thus pushing the world out of balance, became part of both the popular imaginary (Green, 2009; James, 2009; Palin, 2013) and academic publications (Locke and Spender, 2011). These accounts assume that through grooming students for corporate life, business education has a fundamental impact on management practice. The strengthening links between business and academia coupled with the increasing marketization of higher education have helped business schools become a powerful source of revenue for universities (Matthews, 2012).

Given the recent economic crisis and the criticism oriented at business schools, an opportunity could emerge to change them fundamentally (Perriton, 2014). However, these critiques are concerned with how management education has veered off course and how it could be done in a way to serve business better; they criticize the business school but not in an attempt to make it more critical of itself. Critical management studies (CMS) offers a more fundamental critique of management education as fundamentally flawed for acting as a training ground for “foot soldiers” of capitalist organizations and market-based exchange (Ehrensals, 2001). This approach fits into the general thrust of CMS to question the neoliberal capitalist system and the inequalities it sustains (for summaries see Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Alvesson, Bridgman and Willmott, 2009). Surely, one would expect CMS scholars to be best equipped to fundamentally change business schools in this context.

The ongoing institutionalization of CMS has resulted in several well-established areas of research, some closely related journals, a biannual conference, academic titles and, crucially for my research, a few critically-oriented² business and management schools and

² Critical orientation is hard to define – both regarding its content and how far it has to go to count. I mean by it a form of management education that incorporates a substantially broader and deeper embedding of the field into the social sciences while raising fundamental ethical and political questions about management and business, than this is common in most business schools. I will give a more thorough explanation in Chapter 3.

departments. This is an important development given that “management education [...] is the most immediate arena within which CMS might hope to influence managerial practice” (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 23). This can happen in two ways. On the one hand, critical management education (CME) has proposed topics and approaches to teaching and learning about management that go beyond issues of technocratic professionalism to include ethical and political considerations too (Fenwick, 2005; French and Grey, 1996; Grey, 2007; Perriton and Reynolds, 2004; Steyaert, Beyes and Parker, 2016). On the other hand, we could also expect critically-oriented schools of business and management influence managerial practice through being exemplars of how management, business, and organizing (Parker, 2016) could be done better. It has been argued though that such a project is riddled with the contradictions of the institutional location of CMS scholars (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011), the difficulty of critiquing one’s institution from the inside (Bridgman and Stephens, 2008; Dunne, Harney, Parker, et al., 2008; Harney and Dunne, 2013), and the self-defeating nature of critique becoming central (Zald, 2002).

Building on these insights and contradictions, in this thesis I investigate how they unfold in an empirical setting. Looking at critically-oriented schools more closely will allow us to better understand academics’ practices and identities, students’ perceptions of their education, and more broadly how such schools negotiate their role in the current academic environment, which includes national policies, global flows, and the universities that house them. As Harney claims,

If there is a certain ethics in the business school today this cannot be connected only to what business scholars want, what they desire for themselves and their students, but also to *what really goes on in the actually existing business school*. [...] That the business school dreams of helicopter rides and crates of champagne ought to be of less interest than the relationship between these dreams and the way teachers and students in the business school actually get to school, what they do there, and what they really drink with dinner, but also, to the way these dreams are connected to what gets done in the university, and increasingly, in the metropolis. (2010: 53–54, emphasis added)

This need for empirical studies of what goes on and what gets done in the business school is equally pronounced if the dreams are not about helicopters and champagne but combating exploitative practices of global corporations or stopping environmental degradation. Such dreams are likewise “connected to what gets done in the university” as well as being a response to and critique of the capitalist world system. Thus, studying critically-oriented business and management schools closely in their interaction with various contexts can help us better understand the complexities of contemporary politics in business schools as well as possibly opening up new routes of political engagement.

More specifically, this research asks how various contexts are articulated together to result in the emergence of critically-oriented schools of business and management? What elements of the social totality have to come together for us to be able to ask this question? By offering a close-up ethnographic study of such schools, it continues a tradition in organization studies and CMS but also complements these by turning the lens of investigation onto ourselves. To answer the question of articulation, of the connections between elements of the social, it is necessary to look at both what is typically understood as the outside and the inside of business schools. I build on studies of CMS academics across institutions (e.g. Butler and Spoelstra, 2012, 2014), in particular settings (e.g. Bell and King, 2010), and their studies of academic life (e.g. Knights and Clarke, 2014). And the empirical focus on three business schools in my research allows me to investigate insights from this literature in very specific situated contexts.

One part of this research is concerned with the contradictory position that critically-oriented management academics occupy in today's business schools (Chapter 5) and that critically-oriented schools occupy in today's universities (Chapter 4). This is also a question about the institutionalization of CMS and critique in more general terms (Chapter 6). As Parker (2015: 176) puts it, "if we were to look at the next fifty years of the business school can we imagine [...] a vibrant range of 'not-management' thought? Can the business school develop its own immanent critique?" And to add to this, what does critique look like in critically-oriented schools and departments? How is it practiced in discourses of research, teaching, administrative duties, decision making and activism in academics' own workplaces inside the business schools I investigate? And finally, can (institutionalized) critique result in a rearticulation of what the business school stands for and how it operates?

Another part of the thesis (Chapter 7) raises questions about CME in the more limited sense of teaching. As the primary arena where future managers can be influenced, I find it crucial to complement existing studies in the field. Some of these have focused on teaching approaches and methods (Grey, Knights and Willmott, 1996; Prichard, 2009). Others have reported on experiences with students, mostly at MBA level (Currie and Knights, 2003; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2005; Rhodes, 2016; Sinclair, 2007; Warhurst, 2011) but also, increasingly, by recent PhD students (Batchelor and Fulop, 2003; Prasad, 2013, 2016). For some reason with very few exceptions the group that spends the most time at these business schools, undergraduate students, have been researched much less. As an exception, Dehler (2009) reports on his experience with a cohort of undergraduates at a US college, and concludes that it may be more difficult for this group to reflect critically on

questions of management as students often don't have work experience. Connecting these approaches to teaching and learning, I study how undergraduate teaching is organized in one of the schools in my study. What are the potentialities of and constraints on the content and method of teaching using a social scientific approach? What and how do students learn from their education? Can management education in critically-oriented schools "extend beyond the skills of 'critical thinking'", as Dehler (2009: 45) says, and result in "an ability to also *think critically*"?

1.3. Theoretical and empirical points of entry

In order to address these questions, I draw on the theoretical framework of articulation and methodological approach of ethnographic inquiry often used in (British) cultural studies. In the spirit of cultural studies (e.g. Williams, 1989), I hope the thesis exemplifies a resistance to being categorized into fields or disciplines while engaging with organization and management studies, political economy, education studies and gender studies amongst others. Still, I cannot guarantee a *full* analysis because reality is more complex than what can be traced or theorised. This not only includes the word and time limits set by a PhD project but a general epistemological stance regarding the impossibility of giving a full and universal account of any phenomenon. As Clifford (2013: 45) argues, ethnographic research should "work among irreconcilable antinomies, entering the paradoxes and tensions of our historical moment with agendas that are positioned and relational, pushing against, while drawing on, partial perspectives. The result is a more realistic, because multiscaled, dialogical and unfinished, understanding of contemporary sociocultural worlds. This, at least, is my wager".

Articulation theory as understood in cultural studies – most prominently in the works of Hall, Grossberg, and Clifford that I discuss in Chapter 2 – argues that the point of research is to discover what makes it possible to ask the questions listed above at the beginning of research (Grossberg, 2006). Understanding this will make us determine what the conjuncture is, which in turn will lead to finding out the right question to be asked at the *very end* of the research (Grossberg, 2006). It is only by doing the work of empirical investigation of composite parts that we can arrive at an understanding of why certain articulations exist and how they can be reconfigured. Articulation in this sense is a non-necessary correspondence between elements of the social totality that certain "lines of tendential force" push towards coming together, that imbues particular social phenomena and practices with meaning (Hall in Grossberg, 1986). In any articulation the meanings of composite parts depend on the

other elements, what Grossberg (2010) calls radical contextuality. Consequently, by rearticulating some parts the fixation of any articulation can be loosened.

For instance, *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al., 1978) “argued that Great Britain was in the midst of an organic crisis; the analysis of ‘mugging’ that is the empirical starting point, pointed to that crisis, and yet it was only in the context of that crisis that one could even identify mugging *as a problem*” (Grossberg, 2006: 14, emphasis added). In addition, with regard to the rise of conservative ideology in Britain in the late-1970s, Hall (1988: 29) argues that “the whole discourse of Thatcherism combines ideological elements into a discursive chain in such a way that the logic or unity of the discourse depends on the subject addressed assuming a number of specific subject positions”. This approach can be usefully adapted to the context of my research. I argue that the existence of critically-oriented business and management schools, my empirical starting point, highlights the crisis of neoliberal capitalism, yet it is only in the context of this crisis that one can even identify CMES³ as a *solution*. However, there is an important difference between starting the analysis with what is identified as a problem or as a solution.

Using a solution as my point of entry results in a potential contradiction regarding the (political) goal of doing research. Hall and others use their analyses to identify problems and subject positions that are produced by the hegemonic ideology. This points them towards the identification of a conjuncture, and proposals for political action aimed at rearticulation. However, my study turns this around to examine how a counterhegemonic discourse works and the subject positions it produces. If we carry the underlying logic of articulation to its conclusion, then clearly not only problems but also solutions articulated in a particular conjuncture come to make sense as part of the same context. Foucault (1997: 118–119) also highlights the co-constructedness of problems and solutions in his discussion of “problematization”, which he defines as “a movement of critical analysis in which one tries to see how the different solutions to a problem have been constructed; but also how these different solutions result from a specific form of problematization”. Therefore, CMES can also be understood as symptomatic of the conjuncture it is a part of. Politically, this may be interesting because just as neoliberalism managed to redefine some discourses of Gramscian “common sense” (2011) and produce new subject positions, it should become possible for us after deconstructing the discourses in which CMES becomes a solution to

³ I use CMES, following Grey (2007), to refer to both CMS and CME at the same time. As he argues, although there are clear differences in their historical development, “it remains the case that the literatures on CMS and CME substantially overlap in terms of the kinds of knowledge each draws upon, the arguments each makes and, indeed, in authorship” (Grey, 2007: 464).

construct new subject positions or to interpellate people in existing subject positions from rearticulated discourses.

At this point, it becomes important to consider why certain other theoretical frameworks are not used in this project. First, neo-institutional theory (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996) would be an obvious choice for the study of the institutionalization of critically-oriented schools. The main problem with this approach for my purposes is that it precisely masks how institutional and group divisions are created and maintained. Once these have been established, institutional theory offers some important concepts and frames to analyse structural similarities and differences between institutions. It however generally relies on a concept of agency and power that postulates these as individual attributes (Willmott, 2013). It therefore leaves unexamined the interaction between structure and agency. Articulation theory, which I rely on in this thesis, offers a theoretical possibility to examine how hegemonic structures are created and held in place and how individual agency both sustains and challenges these structures.

Second, Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality could be another framework to use to study the relationship between the current episteme of neoliberal capitalism and the subjectivities it produces, who then internalize its logics and govern their own conduct of life accordingly. Management researchers, university administrators and business students are equally subject to neoliberal governmentality – as are CMS academics too. However, Kerr (1999) criticizes work using governmentality claiming that it does not account comprehensively enough for the contradictions and struggle within and despite which the social reproduction of governmental conduct takes place. Similarly, Grossberg (2010: 320 fn.17) argues that “governmentality [...] constructs a seamless web between capitalism (finance, post-Fordism, etc.), politics, and subjectivity. It ignores the historical specificity of such practices”. Articulation theory allows me to present how this alignment actually takes places in the particular empirical context and how it is challenged, often locally and temporarily.

Third, one might argue that more attention should be paid to questions of affect and sociomaterial arrangements in articulation, which simply fall outside the remit of this doctoral thesis. For instance, Papadopoulos (2006) argues that while the intentionality of articulation theory to intervene in politics discursively was useful for struggles of the “studies-discourse”, its effectiveness and validity are questionable today. “World 2”, the world of transnational mobility and new social movements, refuses the unifying domination of “the western developmental doctrine [...] by manufacturing new, ordinary, everyday social spaces which

defy representation in our existing discourses” (Papadopoulos, 2006: 166). This appears to be the world of affect where the experience of a “primordial obliteration” precedes articulation, “the moment in which a person or even a community is seduced by the possibility of a better life” (Papadopoulos, 2006: 172). Understood this way, the concept of articulation implies the possibility of its own failure. At the same time, it also underscores that the articulation may not even happen due to power differentials or, very often, material bodily concerns related to the finiteness of life that can result in the loss of desire to intervene. While this critique is very relevant, my understanding of articulation does not imply a necessarily conscious attempt at producing discursive change. Hall arrives at a similar conclusion when he says that “a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects” (Grossberg, 1986: 53).

1.4. Key findings

My analysis proceeds by looking at how different contexts are articulated together – the respective universities and the global and national lines of force they are embedded in, the various often contradictory contexts of different schools of business and management, staff members’ and students’ subject positions, and academic networks in the particular field of business-management and CMS. Such an approach is in line with Clifford’s understanding of articulation as a condensation of different local and global spaces as well as times past and future (Clifford, 2013, and see Chapter 2). As he argues partial “realism works with ‘big-enough,’ more-than-local, narratives: histories that travel and translate, but without cumulating in a coherent destiny, progressive or apocalyptic. We thus rely on processes of juxtaposition and mediation, generalizing but never general” (Clifford, 2013: 41).

The story I present in the following chapters does not aim to be a coherent one either. My analysis shows that these UK-based critically-oriented schools of business and management are negotiated spaces where understanding and practice of the very notion of critique depends on the contexts these schools are embedded in. Academics in the schools I investigated come to be “critical” in the framework set out by these contexts but they also performatively articulate the very same contexts through their actions. Consequently, there is no general notion of critique that “critically-oriented” would express but this is also locally

negotiated – that both asserts the possibility of critique and questions its ability to exert fundamental change.

There are no guarantees that the details that follow will be read and understood the way I imagined them (Grossberg, 2010: 18). I have considered this thesis a respectful critique (Forsythe, 2001; Suchman, 1999) – appreciative but honest – for a “vigilant community” (do Mar Pereira, 2013: 201) who are interested in the questions I ask and understand the answers I provide. I don’t mean to turn CMS into a “problem”, into “the *primary* object of problematization, research, and discussion among us” that would turn our attention away from confronting managerialism (Cooke, 2008: 913, emphasis added). Rather, I think that we can and should learn from occasional but serious reflexive research to be able to problematize managerialism and other organizational wrongdoings better and to appreciate more the situations in which we find our interlocutors. Doing my bits of such a reflection, I end this thesis by considering potential routes for politics that emerge from my research. However, in the spirit of cultural studies, I dispute both the idea that our “findings” can unequivocally define the politics we ought to follow to change the current situation, and also the opposite claim that presenting the messiness of life and the consequent lack of clear political path to a better future would necessarily mean being complicit in upholding the current system (Grossberg, 2010). As Grossberg (2010: 18) says, “Cultural studies rejected the idea that any such guarantees were possible; the complexity of the world simply meant that one would have to keep on working, continue theorizing, accepting that failure is a part of the path to telling better stories”.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The story told in this thesis proceeds the following way. Chapter 2 details the theoretical framework briefly presented on the preceding pages. I review the intellectual journey along which my framework developed and present how this reconfigured research questions and the nature of the whole dissertation from one closely focused on matters of CME to a broader investigation of critically-oriented schools of business and management. In this chapter then I present the literature on articulation as a theory of contexts working mainly with the ideas of Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, and James Clifford. The theoretical framework underpins my approach to the empirical material in the form of radical contextualism where the organization of power and the lived experience of power are

analysed to see where the multiplicity of and contradictions between these contexts enable new political strategies.

Having formed a theoretical approach, I move on to discuss the methodology I used to answer my final research questions in Chapter 3. I describe my research strategy, an ethnographic case study of a critically-oriented business and management school in the UK, my main site, where I conducted 14 months of fieldwork that included participant observation of meetings, classes, conferences and daily life, interviews with members of faculty, university management, and third-year undergraduate students. At two other schools, my minor sites, I only conducted interviews with academics, which gave me an opportunity to develop some contrasts between the three schools and have an external reflection on the main site itself. This is followed by a discussion of selecting the particular sample of schools to study and individuals to interview as well as details of the actual methods of data construction, and an account of how I approached the data using a combination of thematic analysis and deconstruction. Finally, the chapter concludes with my reflections on the research process, the difficulties I faced given my involvement in the field and the ethical challenges that this research posed.

Having set the stage for the analysis, the next four chapters each present a particular context where the articulation of critical orientation happens. These chapters combine my analysis with the review of relevant academic literature – showing the inseparability of theories and empirical findings. First, in Chapter 4, I present the embedded contexts of British higher education, the universities, and the schools in my study. I argue that many of the discourses in these schools are based on an (imagined) antagonism between university management and school members' ideas. However, both of these are mitigated by responses to the conceptualisation of higher education as a market and that of the university as a business. This makes the university see some strategic value in offering something different and makes the schools subscribe to accepting some of this discourse in order to be able to exist. The articulation of a critical school of management points to the ontological aspect of the current conjuncture, neoliberalism in higher education as its condition of possibility.

Moving from the level of the school as a whole to competing contexts inside it, in Chapter 5 I trace some common subject positions that exist at my main site, which provide shades for the largely shared public face described in the previous chapter. I argue that having a variety of people in the School with different material backgrounds and affective, lived realities, is important for assuring that the principle of critique remains alive. The internal

contradictions between different subject positions are precisely a constituting part of the articulation of a critically-oriented school.

In Chapter 6, I consider claims to a “we” that exists across the academic field of CMS. I present the history of CMS as an articulation and contrast this with perceptions of what CMS is, what it does, or what it should do, at the schools. I argue that through understanding articulation as a process (Clifford, 2013), we could reconsider the contested articulations of the history of CMS as symptomatic of the institutionalization of critique through a variety of practices that continuously displace attempts at producing a fixed articulation of a critically-oriented school. In the last part of the chapter, I draw up a map of what critique means for my respondents, and argue that as long as rigour and relevance are separated from each other, this will necessarily result in the primacy of the former in the current contexts of academic life.

In the last chapter of data analysis, I turn specifically to teaching and learning as a context in which students, tutors, and insights of the previous three chapters interact. I find that teaching is the aspect that underscores the non-intentional nature of articulation. The lack of any structured, institutional engagement with teaching critically shows the point where any theoretical idea of intentional articulation breaks down rarely reaching its intended goal of developing students who live critically. Although few but very important exceptions exist. At the same time, this lack of emphasis on teaching, and particularly pedagogic methods, is clearly the product of the same system of power relations as the critically-oriented schools themselves. In such a context, changing the content of education becomes a rather critical act.

The final Chapter 8 provides an account of the main findings of the preceding four chapters before moving on to discussing the implications of these findings. This is the point where I return to the question of politics and consider potential future directions for critically-oriented business schools. In light of the performative re-iteration of the contexts that are articulated together in such schools, on the one hand, I argue that management academics should engage with the performativity of their practices at their workplaces, for instance by extending the work that cynicism can accomplish. On the other hand, they should appreciate how students come to form part of the performative articulation of these contexts and create spaces in which this non-necessary performativity becomes clearly visible and at least mildly challenged. But before we get to this question of politics, the work of analysis awaits. It all begins with setting out my theoretical framework in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE FRAMEWORK ARTICULATED

Writing a PhD is an educational endeavour. Not only in the obvious sense of hopefully becoming a certified member of the academic community at the end, but also in terms of learning along the way, being led forth to answers and skills. Only to face new issues and difficulties. The methodology chapter, as well as writing in general (see Parker, 2014b), often ends up reading like a module report for external examiners. A clever set of logically constructed elements, where content is selected using more than the module leader's knowledge and personal preferences of topics, authors, journals, and articles. Where assessment practices neatly fit together to facilitate learning with a careful balance of formative and summative elements that should at the same time help and measure students' educational achievements. Not only praise but carefully selected negative student feedback is included to produce action points, already responded to, for the future semesters. Too neat, too planned, too organized. We all know that readings are often selected from the pool already known by the tutor, assessment strategies tend to be inherited from previous module leaders and are hardly possible to obtain permission to change fundamentally, that we have kept certain spot-on negative feedback to ourselves.

In this and the following chapter, I am concerned with providing a framework and methodological tools to answer the personal question this research originates from, what do I want to do as an educator? But I do this conserving some of the contradictions and changes that this effort has involved. Not necessarily chronologically, indeed the question about myself occurred to me only months after starting my PhD, but rather following a logic that presents the complexity of the contexts in which this question occurs and comes to be answered. Thus, my aim is not to give a truthful account either of myself or of the choices that I made regarding the theories and methods used in this research (as I will argue in the

last section of this chapter I do not believe such an account is possible) but to outline that there were constrained choices made in this process, sometimes careful, at others sudden, sometimes by myself but also, rather explicitly, by others.

The question of what I do as an educator sprung out of a few years of experience of teaching in a business school in Budapest, Hungary. Zero hour contracts, rightly causing an uproar recently in the UK, have been a fundamental feature of the Hungarian economy ever since the change of regimes in 1989. The legacy of state provision, which continued to offer free healthcare, education, and other basic services to everyone, made itself felt in an effective income tax rate of above 50 per cent, which companies started to regard as too high a personnel cost. Coupled with the high rates of unemployment at the beginning of the transition period and the general subscription to the free market ideology of unlimited possibilities through entrepreneurship, it was easy to make people believe that becoming a sole entrepreneur and being contracted as such is the way towards prosperity. Fortunately, I was a respected enough member of the work community not to have to look for another place over the years I had spent at the business school. However, it also meant teaching over 20 hours a week, including some of the weekends, amounting to over 2,500 hours of teaching in 6 years. In retrospect, it is not very surprising that I wanted to understand what I was doing and whether it could be done any differently, meaning better by my own standards, in keeping with the aim of making students think about economies and management as embedded in particular societies.

This question appeared to me under various guises through time. Changes in the main research question were propelled by ruptures and continuities, which is a matter of perspective, in thinking through how methodology could be developed to answer the research questions, in becoming acquainted with different strands of literature (sometimes by chance), and in explicit advice or warning by people I talked to. I will outline these changes here briefly and then go on to discuss each one of them respectively in the sections that follow. The first iteration of this research had me considering the impact of teaching, whether teaching from a critical position would have a lasting effect on students' working lives, and if they could identify moments in which their actions and opinions were impacted by their prior studies. Indeed, this was how the question was framed in my application for the PhD vaguely carried out through asking participants to maintain a reflective diary for several months as a method. It took about a month for it to change, though, due to a senior scholar's advice before I applied, my rediscovery of readings in cultural studies for one of the doctoral courses, and my supervisors' question at the first official meeting we had ("How can you

capture impact?”). As a result, not only did I change in my initial question from impact to a concern with meaning, but also my research topic from post-educational experience to questions around teaching and learning in critically-oriented business schools (Section 2.1). Impact, as I outline in Chapter 4, has morphed into a concept that requires critical interrogation.

Still keeping education, understood here as teaching and learning, in the focus, I decided to explore the meanings of CME through focus groups with students and interviews with staff members. Imagining education as a relationship between producers and receivers of educational messages in the particular context of critical schools of management, I was planning to use Hall’s encoding-decoding model. As operationalized by Morley and Brunson (1999 [1978]), this approach would have allowed me to identify types of sympathetic and oppositional readings by students. However, further readings in the area, not least Morley’s later reflections on the *Nationwide* study, and comments made by my upgrade examiners asking me to consider social semiotics (which did not resonate with what I wanted to do) and Deleuze’s concept of the fold, so eloquently represented by Gibson Burrell’s clinching fists (which eventually I don’t engage with explicitly but has become important as an underlying perspective), pointed at complexity not adequately present in my research approach.

This led to a third stage, that in the end forms the theoretical-methodological basis of this thesis. To account for the variety of contexts in which both the research participants and myself continuously find ourselves in, I turned to the theory of articulation. Somewhat marginal since its heyday in the 1980-90s following Laclau and Mouffe’s (2001 [1985]) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the approach – in rather different ways – has been kept alive by James Clifford and Lawrence Grossberg. It was around this point, having engaged with this research for over 2 years, that I noted in my research journal: “I’d started off writing a PhD about critical management education but ended up writing one about critical management studies”.

These twists and turns of theoretical framework and research methodology are interesting beyond the simple story of how this research developed for two reasons. First, coherence is often expected from research accounts. Academic writing in English usually requires an explicit and sustained argument that leads to identifiable contributions. This is constraining, though not inherently bad, way of writing, which due to the nature of research is always fitted onto the research account in retrospect. Organizing a text thus becomes textual organization (Cooper and Law, 1995). The various iterations, editing, comments

disappear and only the neat-looking universalized disembodied output remains. Discussing, however briefly, the ways my research has evolved, I hope to present some of the struggle that has gone into conforming to such expected forms of writing and at the same time discuss related fields of academic inquiry that I chose not to engage with explicitly in the later chapters. Second, this research contained lots of learning points. This certainly is the case with much (truly discovery-led) research but its perceived impact seems bigger to me in doing a project of such length for the first time. This practically means, for instance, that some of my research and interview questions in the beginning were based on what I called the second stage above, and there was no way later to go back and redo the research differently – to change my methodology in the past.

In the following three sections, I expand on each stage described above to arrive at a working theory of articulation for this thesis. While none of the known expositions of this theoretical framework provide explicit direct methodological guidance, I describe how I developed the methods used in the first case and then how I rearranged these methods in line with the theoretical changes. The final methodology is described in Chapter 3.

2.1. Measuring the impact of education

In the first iteration, as I have already said, based on the many hours of teaching I did at the time I wanted to know how offering students an opportunity to study management critically influenced the workplace experiences. Upon entering a workplace, such students may experience a fundamental contradiction between being critical and managerial that forces them to reconstruct their identities (Fenwick, 2005). I postulated that the times when students' professional identity is challenged might be such critical incidents where reflection stemming from their education becomes pertinent. They might want to voice their concerns or quit the organization. Therefore, my research would have investigated the “struggle in conceptualizing a reflexive subject with the will and capacity to reflect upon and challenge the hegemonic ways of being” (Thomas, 2009: 176).

If the first question asked whether such a reflexive subject exists, the second one would have liked to explore if this is the result of students' education, and in particular of studying management critically. If management education contributes to the formation of students' consciousness or socialization, then, I still think four years later, it is worth studying whether CME engenders “reflexive, critical practitioners able to understand and operate in the complexity of the social world and the political and ethical issues embedded in their

managerial knowledge as well as practice” (Contu, 2009: 543). The findings of Ford et al. (2010), for instance, are both alarming and promising in this regard. Alarming because despite the elements of critical reflexivity their graduate respondents had been introduced to, they did attempt to present themselves as proper managerial selves. But promising at the same time, because if management education “may provide norms of management that some students internalize and use as a means for assessing the self” (Ford, Harding and Learmonth, 2010: S76), then teaching management differently might avoid this (likely uncritically) or lead to the internalization of a critical, reflexive attitude.

Behind these two questions and the construction of identity however lay the basic problem whether the impact CME can be traced somehow. “Assessing the self” (Ford, Harding and Learmonth, 2010) is not the same as provoking someone to act differently. Which, in turn, is not the same as someone being able to reflect on their identity and the source cause of their actions (and if one can single out their education as such). Finally, much action in the kind of critical incidents that I wanted to investigate, is much more embodied and affective than based on conscious evaluation. Impact, as I will discuss in detail with regard to research in Chapter 4, is impossible to measure. And as I show below prefiguring that longer discussion, when it comes to teaching, this idea of a forceful interaction between separate actions happens to be problematic to evaluate precisely because what are assumed to be multiple entangled causes (including “teaching”) and their multifarious effects (including “learning”) co-constitute each other.

Accounts of teaching and learning often assume a more or less complicated transference of knowledge and information from the instructor to the learner. Education theory has of course recognized this problem (for a summary, see National Research Council (US) 2000), and has been reoriented towards issues of learning (or teaching and learning), thus shifting the focus of investigation onto the student and their experience. While theories of learning date back to the mid-20th century (Bloom, 1956; Ripple and Rockcastle, 1964), they have received increased attention in the last 20 years in higher education. Authors like Barr and Tagg (1995: 15) go as far as to claim the responsibility of educational institutions is to “produce learning”. With teaching and learning as distinguishable elements in a cause and effect relationship in the McUniversity (Parker and Jary, 1995), it is not surprising to see the rising importance of student feedback, as exemplified by the National Student Survey in the UK, and students’ evaluation of teachers and courses as the most prominent way of judging instructors’ performance. That is, whether tutors are capable of effecting learning in students. (One might say *by* students but not in the active-participative sense, rather as recipients of

the learning given to them.) However, learning itself is as hard to capture as it is difficult to produce. When and how it happens and what triggers it cannot be pinned down forever. “Is ‘learning’ ‘in’ an event that occurred, or the learner’s responses to it? It seems more plausible that it is a term applied retrospectively to changes in the life-story. If this is so, there can be no direct evidence of ‘learning behaviour’ or ‘learning processes’” (Stables, 2006: 376).

Moosmayer’s (2012) article is indicative of how mainstream research in management education treats the question of influence. As he claims, prominent figures of the International Federation of Scholarly Associations of Management, of which the Academy of Management is a member organization, “often former presidents of their associations, supported the applicability of the survey instrument and found the operationalizations convincing” (Moosmayer, 2012: 162). Credibility thus established, Moosmayer builds a model of “management academics’ intentions to influence [their students’] values”. While the research is situated in the framework of the failure of business schools to prevent fraudulent behaviour and promote social values, well documented in mainstream literature (see Ghoshal, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer and Fong, 2004), Moosmayer evaluates instructors’ intention to address these problems. Although, he claims that “I therefore *argue* that academics can take an active role in delivering values to management students” (Moosmayer, 2012: 155, emphasis added), such an argument is not discussed in detail in the paper.

First, the ever present non-intentional transfer of values is not taken into account. Moosmayer does acknowledge that this may happen “when academics teach theories with specific normative foundations” (2012: 156) but that every (management) theory will have such a value-basis, escapes his attention. Second, he briefly highlights four ways through which educators may influence students’ values: particular course content; theories grounded in specific values; general behaviour and being role models; styles and forms of teaching and student participation. However, he assumes that these actions affect students through organizational socialization in the business school that makes “[b]usiness school students acquire values and attitudes about the roles and responsibilities of business and managers in society” (Moosmayer, 2012: 159). Such a (missing) treatment of how this value transfer happens raises various problems with the analysis. It treats students as passive recipients of management education, almost as a *tabula rasa* onto which any value can be written if the academics so wish. It also ignores the fact that students at any level will always arrive at business schools with their ideas already formed about what business and management is and is like (see Reedy, 2003). Finally, if value sets and attitudes could be so easily instilled

into individuals, then these could equally readily be re-written by work organizations once students graduate.

A more well-rounded account has to uncover the complex practices of how students understand, internalize or resist academics' intended and unconscious attempts at transferring values. Measuring impact or, in educational terms, evaluating whether particular pre-set "intended learning outcomes" have been achieved by the module and the instructor, assumes that meaning can be determined by the encoder-sender. Although educational messages encoded by teachers will "pre-fer" (Hall, 1980a: 124) a certain kind of understanding, how they are actually read cannot ever be fully controlled or accounted for. There is no complete correspondence between what is taught and what is learnt. Learning, argues Stables (2006) in a way indebted to structural semiotics (see Section 2.2), is a retrospective attribution of significance to an event. It is not a change in behaviour, as commonly understood, due to a specific process with a learning quality in it, but rather a set of everyday processes that are interpreted differently. Such interpretations may fall more in or out of line with educational and professional expectations of what learning in that particular field should entail. As one masters these genres more through their ordinary activities, one can be said to have learnt about their field. Further, if the meaning of learning depends on interpretations of life-processes, then the "meaning of learning is always 'deferred'; it never actually 'happens'" (Stables, 2006: 377). Therefore, the single loop of fixed meaning-generation, which the idea of intended learning outcomes incorporates, is conceptually flawed, as it would result in a logical contradiction regarding change. If meaning can be controlled easily by the powerful, then any other kind of meaning ought to be generated equally successfully, which by assuming that people are dummies contradicts the simplest observations about everyday life (cf. de Certeau, 1984).

In summary, there are two internal contradictions in the mainstream principle of measurement of the impact of education. First, it assumes what it wants to measure before actually measuring it; thus, it is compelled to either find, or not find achievements satisfactory according to the pre-established standards. However, this does not make the outcome of measurement capable of explaining how satisfactory results have (not) been achieved. Second, it necessitates the assumption that these standards can be impacted upon relatively easily and eventually changed. Such changes, though, are both unwanted by proponents of measuring impacts and much less predictable for any educator with any conceptual approach (see Ford, Harding and Learmonth, 2010) than this model would assume.

The approaches used to quantify the elusive concept of effectiveness or impact, are all grounded in a positivistic research tradition. They assume the distinctness and separability of the variables (teaching, efficacy, course, etc.) they operationalize in order to make them measurable and, hence, standardizable. However, both the variables used, and the idea that only “scientific” measurements can produce relevant and unbiased insights are products of the particular socio-economic and ideological configuration in which universities operate. These frames of understanding prepare the discursive ground for positivistic research to effectively convey meaning and be intelligible. Articulation, as I show in Section 2.4, may be a useful approach to contextualizing how this intelligibility comes about and broaden the inquiry into the wider social setting that theories of teaching and learning constitute and are constituted by. In Slack’s words, “the context is not something *out there, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices*. Rather, *identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects*” (1996: 126).

For the above reasons, my study is not concerned with how value transfer happens in a (critical) business school and how the impact of education could be measured. At this point, I started reimagining my inquiry as an investigation into how and why the commitment to teaching and learning becomes important for universities under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism. Teaching and learning are not separate but implicated in each other, why these two practices have to be studied together (but not disregarding their specificities). As Hall (1980a) shows, the differences in the codes used for encoding and decoding the message to be transmitted, as I further explain in Section 2.3, continuously give rise to a re-negotiation of meanings (or the outcomes of teaching/learning) throughout the communicative process. I am using the term “re-negotiation” in an attempt to draw attention to the idea that “all action is a form of interpretation: we reinterpret and represent a little bit of the world each moment we are alive. Actually, we all change the world” (Stables, 2006: 383). Intended meanings are never created out of nothing, but are contested solidifications of a particular social and ideological setting built “on the ground of the already given meaning. [...] So each act of signification transforms the given actualized state of all the significations already in existence” (Hall, 1994: 260). These transformations, part of the overall impact of education, can never be fully captured by any sort of static measures of quantification. Hence, a continuous demand to create better, more comprehensive measurements is born together with the idea of measuring a communicative exchange.

Research on critical management education, including my project, should therefore avoid the logic of measuring the impact of (critical management) education while reducing

its value to this one variable alone. Messages of critical management education are not different from any other ones regarding the impossibility of fully controlling their transferability. This makes it an interesting endeavour to collect and analyse the meanings of education for both students and teaching staff members. As Reedy (2003) shows in a critical reflection on his own experiences with an MBA cohort, students arrive to the classroom already with some ideas about what should and is likely to happen there, they have their own agendas. Making a difference in this is not easy, “participation always requires a sufficient degree of solidarity” (Reedy, 2003: 105). Solidarity, though, is not about some inherent universal feature of being human(e), but a certain openness and an “[i]maginative identification with the details of other’s lives” (Rorty, 1989: 190). The need for such identification may be generally lacking in the current individualized environment of business schools in the United Kingdom.

The answer may lie in the meaning attached to education by students and tutors. In order to investigate these meanings, as presented in the next section, I turned to the field of semiotics. Situating my inquiry in the tradition of structural semiotics, in the next section I highlight some of the commonalities and differences this tradition has to social semiotics. After that, I’ll move on to discussing the encoding-decoding model and its application in the circuit of culture approach. This will finally give me a point of entry into articulation theory.

2.2. Social and structural semiotics

Contemporary semiotics, the study of signs and meanings, has two distinct sources. Writing at around the same time in the early-20th century, Saussure (1974 [1916]), a Swiss linguist, and Peirce (1965), a founding figure of US pragmatist philosophy, discussed the processes of signification, leading to structural semiology and social semiotics, respectively. Saussure’s semiology puts the emphasis on language as a system of signs. He argues for a synchronic study of language, which evaluates grammar and vocabulary as a system at one particular point in time, as opposed to the diachronic, developmental approach of most of his contemporaries. Saussure explained how meaning arises as a consequence of differences in the system. For him, signs are dyadic consisting of a signifier, the representation, and a signified, the mental concept being represented. Saussure posited the relationship between signifiers and signifieds to be arbitrary. Thus, learning the code (a particular sign system) constituted the way through which individuals enter social relations. This idea served as an important foundation for structuralism as a current in the social sciences whereby researchers

tried to explain how social structures create individual social identities through the enforcement of (adopting) the code (as for instance in Levi-Strauss' structural anthropological accounts [1963]).

Peircean semiotics (1965), on the other hand, rather focuses on the triadic relationship between the *object*, the *sign*, and the *interpretant* (that establishes a relationship between them). Meaning here is created through various contextually situated practices of interpretation. There are two possible ways of understanding this statement. For instance, Eco (1976, 1984) has argued, amongst others, that interpretation (i.e. the interpretant) is the meaning of a sign. Or

put differently, the interpretant is actually another sign referring to the same "object". Since any initial meaning can be re-interpreted (and often is), each interpretant is thus a sign leading to another interpretant, and so on ad infinitum. This double nature of the interpretant – as both the interpreted sign and the interpreting sign – confers unlimited regress or extrapolation in semiosis (Mick, 1986: 199).

Derrida (2001b) is indebted to this Peircean thought in his interpretation of how sign systems operate in a free play of signifiers. If we assume that the meaning of any text is its interpretant, then it is only the difference of this particular interpretant from all others that can produce meaning. But it is only by referring to those other interpretants that we could, in theory, explain meaning – which is thereby continually deferred. Derrida's (in)famous concept of *différance*, combining difference and deferment, aims to disclose that it is only through the creation of an arbitrary centre, or organizing principle, that this process can appear to have been brought to a halt. In that case meaning appears to have been solidified. (Hence Hall's insight, as I will show later, that any attempt at rearticulation necessarily has to involve a deconstructive moment where this appearance is revealed.)

Other scholars though, often referring to Peirce's later writings, have argued that in line with his pragmatist philosophy, "it is the habit itself, and not a concept of it, that is the interpretant (more precisely, the ultimate logical interpretant) of a concept" (Short, 2004: 228). This orientation present already in Peirce's work indicates an interest in social practices as the source of meaning. His idea has been furthered by social semioticians from the late-1980s, who "locate the origin of meaning within the field of semiosis, or in other words, within the process of context-bound and conflict-laden interpersonal interaction" (Vannini, 2007: 115).

In social semiotics, the rules of social interaction, or "code", are not understood as singular like in traditional structural semiotics but there exist "different types of rules, taken up in different ways in different contexts" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 48). As we have seen, for

Saussure there is no logical connection between specific signifiers and respective signifieds – the *lexicon* is arbitrary. In contrast, social semiotics (see Kress, 1993) holds that signs are produced in use, which is motivated by certain interests and enfolded power relations. That is, arbitrariness is questioned. This raises certain questions for research:

1. How is control exercised, and by whom?
2. How is it justified? [...]
3. How strict are the rules? How much room do they allow for individuality and difference?
4. What happens when people do not follow the rule? What sanctions are attached to deviance?
5. Can the rules be changed, and if so, in what way, and for what kinds of reasons? (van Leeuwen, 2005: 53)

These questions signal that actors in different situations are determined to a different extent by social structures (van Leeuwen, 2005: 75). As I will argue in Section 2.4, these considerations are not dissimilar to questions addressed by the theory of articulation.

In order to map how culture operates in the social, following Swidler (2001), researchers should focus on studying people's routine activities, what Peirce identified as habits, as well as logonomic systems that govern social interactions (Volosinov, 1973). A logonomic system in the definition of Hodge and Kress (1988: 4), is “a set of rules prescribing the conditions for production and reception of meanings; which specify who can claim to initiate (produce, communicate) or know (receive, understand) meanings about what topics under what circumstances and with what modalities (how, when, why)”.

People build on signs as semiotic resources for a definite purpose in their practices (van Leeuwen, 2005; Vannini, 2007). As a first step of research, these resources should be collected by “ask[ing] open questions about what people are doing and how they categorise what they are doing, avoiding the disciplinary or other preconceptions which would automatically read their actions as, say, ‘consumption’ or ‘being-an-audience’, whether or not that is how the actors see their actions” (Couldry, 2004: 125). The collected material can then be analysed in terms of its modality (the way it achieves a claim to truth), semiotic change (tracing the genealogy of concepts in question), semiotic rules (see the issue of non-arbitrariness above), semiotic functions, discourses (knowledge of constructed conventions), style (a marker of identity) and genre (building on shared resources) (van Leeuwen, 2005; Vannini, 2007). Researchers should also be attentive to how practices are ordered by being parts of a larger practice or through dynamic change (Couldry, 2004).

Social semiotics, and the turn to practice it implies, draw attention to the perspective of the individual and the different levels at which ideologies operate. In this respect, I believe it is a useful source for my project that involves a re-assessment of theories of classical British cultural studies that had often tended to favour structural and textual approaches. However,

authors in the field of social semiotics often start their texts by highlighting the differences between structural semiology and their own approach. Many of these differences can be traced back to Saussure's and Peirce's approaches to signs. But even relatively recent accounts are still caught up in discussing major differences between semioticians of the 1980s. Vannini (2007), for instance, argues for social semiotics as introduced by Hodge and Kress (1988) by denouncing Manning (1987), and ends up claiming that social semiotics "holds greater use value" (Vannini, 2007: 114). Compare this with Umiker-Sebeok (1992: 47) who claims the following about the 1980s.

Although Saussure saw semiotics as a part of the social sciences, he conceived of culture as a pool of knowledge and thus, in effect, did away with any serious attention to the socially situated nature of signs and communication. Over the last dozen years, there has been such a vital cross-fertilization of ideas between the Saussurean, code- and language-centered semiology and the pragmatic, interpretive, Peircean-inspired semiotics that it would be difficult to find any semiotician today who did not believe in the necessity of developing an interpretive, pragmatic sociosemiotics.

I believe such a rapprochement is a potentially more fruitful approach to the study of signs.

Let me briefly consider here one aspect of structural semiotics that I insist on in my project and one of social semiotics that I see as irreconcilable with the approach I take in the rest of this chapter. These also demarcate eventually which considerations on my intellectual journey have become part of my theoretical framework. First, in line with Saussure, Derrida, and much of classic cultural studies, I concur that meaning arises through difference. This in my view does not conflict with making it a priority to study practice in its various forms. Second, regardless whether the explanation starts with practice or structure, it is not the relationship between an object and a sign that makes it perceivable but the difference of their specific relationship to any other potential or actual relationship. Following his pragmatist philosophy, Peirce "describe[d] the process of sign-interpretation, or, as he called it, semeiosis, as being end-directed" (Short, 2004: 230). The idea that signs are used for a purpose has been carried over to social semiotics too. This teleology, though, for Peirce implies an overt and for social semioticians a hidden promise, reminiscent of positivistic natural sciences. Namely, that our understanding of the social can be advanced to produce ever more appropriate descriptions of the world. In my view, such an end does not exist; the ever-changing nature of the social requires that its explanation should also change with time as "life remains too rich for us to pin it down" (Stables, 2006: 381). These two considerations locate my approach in the field of structural semiotics, which in turn makes me consider in more detail how this framework was used in cultural studies in the next section.

2.3. Encoding/decoding

Meaning and signification were key themes of research and theorizing at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham in the 1970-80s. Several studies attempted to combine the ideas of Saussure and the post-Marxist theories of Althusser and Gramsci, or the Marxist linguist Volosinov. Hall's (1980a [1973]) encoding/decoding model of communication clearly builds on all these sources to address the meaning-making practices producers and consumers of mass media messages engage in. Hall's theory, as I discuss in what follows, was revelatory at its conception in the early 1970s because it brought together the previously neglected social acts of "production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction" (Pillai, 1992: 221) in a so-called circuit of communication. Encoding and decoding are conceptualized as two moments of meaning-making, whereby "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which decodings will operate" (Hall, 1980a: 125). These limits and parameters constitute what Hall terms the "preferred meaning" of a text.

It is important for Hall to get past the fixation of media studies on intention and origins, and examine the effects of communication always already living inside discourses and ideologies. His position is a reaction to the prevalent explanations of understanding media in the 1970s. On the one hand, the "uses and gratifications" model, which theorized that the viewer had full authority to explain media messages. On the other, the film theory associated with *Screen* magazine, which similarly to the "effects theory" of media violence, assumed "the near total effectivity of the text" (Morley, 1999: 280) to put audiences into a certain position. Hall mitigates these positions by connecting them to the complex social, political, cultural context in which encoding and decoding take place. Preferred meaning then, in lieu of a better concept, describes how the encoding of the text attempts to constrain possible readings. This attempt does not necessarily imply a conscious intention on the part of the encoder to preferring a certain meaning as encoders are also constrained by their own institutional context (Hall, 1994: 262).

Depending on the hypothetical decoding position of the audience for the message vis-à-vis that of its producer, meanings are negotiated. Hall argues that the intended message of any communicative action can be, I would add, is always, decoded differently due to "the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange" (Hall, 1980a: 120). By lack of equivalence here Hall refers to differences in the discursive positions of the actors. "Relative autonomy" and "determinateness" (Hall, 1980a: 120) are present at the

same time in the process of communication. Consequently, readings can be sympathetic to the hegemonic encoding (Hall calls this “the dominant code”); they may accept the dominant cultural code while at the same time “[operate] with exceptions to the rule” (Hall, 1980a: 127) at a personal, socially situated and embodied level (“the negotiated code”); or they might refuse the hegemonic interpretation of an event and construct an alternative, often totalizing, reading of it (“the oppositional code”).

These positions actually depict a range of possibilities, but both the hegemonic reading with its complete correspondence between the encoding and decoding positions as well as the similarly totalizing oppositional code, are the extreme limiting cases. To put it differently, most decoding uses the negotiated code, or is located in the “negotiated space” as Hall and Jefferson (2006 [1976]) came to reconceptualize it in *Resistance through Rituals*. Moreover, since encoding does not simply reproduce the dominant ideology but is a “contested and variable space” (Hall, 1994: 263), the meaning of “hegemonic” can also change.

Formally speaking, positions can only be “critical” or “mainstream” in relation to other positions within a larger discursive field. The two terms thus do not primarily signify fixed contents of thought, but their status within a whole, often dispersed, field of statements, claims and knowledges, what Foucault calls a “regime of truth” (Ang, 1996: 30).

It’s important to acknowledge that this also implies that there is “no necessary correspondence” (Hall, 1985) between particular social positions and particular readings. Wren-Lewis (1983: 194) points out the “epistemological absurdity” of how a distinction between the real and the discursive (in orthodox Marxist formulations, between class position and ideology/signification) gives credit to the belief that the latter is less real or the former is non-discursive. The ideology of the discourse in which a message is encoded, the particular regime of truth, will make it, claims Hall (1985) reading Althusser, structured in dominance.

So when Morley (1981: 6) asks if “the preferred reading [is] a property of the text, the analyst or the audience”, Hall’s answer is clearly that texts are structured in a way that they constrain meaning (see Hall, 1994: 266). It is therefore some form of textual analysis that ought to identify this preferring, which ultimately relies on a subjective analysis lacking the tools for a scientific analysis of meaning. Wren-Lewis (1983: 184), on the other hand, claims that the “[a]nswer must inevitably be: the audience”, otherwise the text would have a preferred reading even before its being read by a historically located audience. He proposes to derive what is preferred from empirical studies of the audience. Proponents of a practice-

based approach who argue that the text has had primacy in British media/cultural studies take the same stance some 20 years later. While the importance of the audience has been recognized by Hall and others as a determining moment in the production of meaning, it was “decisively influenced by semiotics, so requiring that all questions about media to start from the supposed structuring properties of the text itself” (Couldry, 2004: 118). Instead of texts or institutions, argues Couldry (2004), one should start the analysis by looking at media related practices through which types of (non-)audiences can be constructed. Then we can proceed to explore how people understand the practices people engage in rather than attribute explanatory power to pre-established categories (such as the audience). People related to critical management education/studies certainly perform a great number of practices, but a crucial difference is that it is not an activity that student-audiences can completely freely choose (not) to engage in given that it is part of the educational curriculum, which requires them to be present at (most of their) classes. Couldry’s suggestions could potentially make the model more precise and therefore valuable in terms of positivist science but Hall rejects such reformulations for they would foreclose the possibility of reading any text in an oppositional way (see Hall, 1994: 266).

Hall (1980a) theorizes that the preferred reading is achieved when a message is decoded using the same codes with which the encoding happened, or when there are relations of equivalence between the encoders and the decoders. This already implies that Hall incorporates a further developed version of Bernstein’s (1971) proposition that language use and class position are related. In Bernstein’s theory, codes depend on socialization that in turn depends on class belonging as this entails “perceiv[ing] different orders of relevance and relation, of understanding of themselves, others and the world” (Rosen, 1974: 4). Thus, the working classes would come to use a “restricted code”, which is more rigid and attached to the particular context, and middle classes an “elaborated code”, which is more flexible and capable of abstraction. Rosen (1974) agrees with the basic idea but accuses Bernstein of oversimplifying both class, by focusing only on the supposedly well-demarcated but actually very stereotypically defined working and middle classes, and the assumption of invariable correspondence between class belonging and language use. Rosen concludes, “Working-class speech has its own strengths which the normal linguistic terminology has not been able to catch. There is no sharp dividing line between this and any other kind of speech, but infinite variations in the deployment of the resources of language” (1974: 19) that includes “history, traditions, job experience, ethnic origins, residential patterns, level of organization...” (1974:

6). It is this conceptualization of a relationship between social position and language that is then taken up by Hall in the encoding/decoding model.

Given its internal contradictions and the difficulties it raises with regard to research the model has hardly ever been operationalized in its pure form. Still, it has been formative for understanding mass media audiences in cultural studies. Hall admittedly didn't originally intend for the model to serve as a basis for research, as it doesn't have "the theoretical rigour, the internal logical and conceptual consistency for that" (1994: 225) but rather as an approach that can open up questions concerning the nature of communication and audiences. Indeed, Morley and Brunsdon's research on the *Nationwide* audience aims

to investigate the extent to which [...] individual readings are patterned into cultural structures and clusters. What is needed here is an approach which links differential interpretations back to the socio-economic structure of society, showing how members of different groups and classes, sharing different 'culture codes', will interpret a given message differently, not just at the personal, idiosyncratic level, but in a way 'systematically related' to their socio-economic position (Morley, 1999: 134).

But their study admittedly fails to establish such a systematic connection.

Morley conducted the second half of the *Nationwide* research focusing on the audience, and the interplay between structure and agency in their decoding practices. He situates the study in contrast with the three different paradigms of audience research already mentioned: the hypodermic model, which assumes the power of the text over the viewer; the functionalist normative paradigm, which assumes that texts only have effects if they strengthen audiences' previous dispositions; and the interpretative paradigm, which investigated meaning-making, but assumed that only one real meaning of a text can exist. Instead of these, Morley makes use of Hall's ideas on encoding/decoding in the circuit of communication (1980a) assuming that encoding is a complex activity, therefore the same event may be encoded in various ways. This leads to a polysemic message but one that is structured in dominance, making it neither a "unilateral sign" that has full effect on the reader, nor a "disparate sign" that can be understood to serve the gratification of the reader, but a "complex sign" (Morley, 1999: 124). Consequently, any reading is always potentially different from another reading, and it is only the message decoded through this reading activity that can result in certain effects.

Before messages can have "effects" on audiences, they must be decoded. "Effects" is thus a shorthand, and inadequate, way of marking the point where audiences differentially read and make sense of messages which have been transmitted, and act on those meanings within the context of the rest of their situation and experience. (Morley, 1999: 125).

This insight resonates with Cooper and Law (1995) who discuss how any “effect” depends on a retrospective attribution of change or a happening to a particular event. Morley here in my view argues that meaning-effects can only arise once the decoder has situated the message in their own semantic network. Where this network comes from and what it entails was a central question for Morley. This was complemented by an interest in how the meaning of the text changes according to context, in the sense of the discourses an audience member is implicated in, but also how it transforms these various discourses at the same time. The conclusion of the study, however, argued that one specific continuum ranging from oppositional through negotiated to dominant readings cannot be established. Rather, there are various ways of exhibiting any single one of these categories. As Morley (1999: 260) concludes, “social position in no way directly correlates with decodings”. Not surprisingly, Morley shifted his originally rather positive views on the encoding/decoding model over time (see Hall, 1994: 255–256). What remains is the possibility to construct some cultural groupings with regard to their decoding practices “in [their] complex articulations with questions of class, ideology and power, where social structures are conceived as also the social foundations of language, consciousness and meaning” (Morley, 1999: 135).

The encoding/decoding model later made its way from the analysis of communication strictly focused on mass media to other “texts”, understood in the poststructuralist sense. Radway’s *Reading the Romance* (1991 [1984]) is an ethnographic study of the “Smithton women”, a reading group of 42 devoted female readers of romantic novels. Radway, though she does not directly refer to their work, shares a similar preoccupation with the audience as Hall, Morley and their colleagues (cf. Radway, 1991: 8). She also highlights how readers in the book club have a certain freedom in understanding the romance novels they read as opposed to being fully interpellated by some kind ideology forced onto them by the text. More importantly, though, Radway finds that it is the activity of reading, the social practice itself that makes these women become such avid readers. This, on the one hand, is due to the social-material circumstances of the readers, inasmuch as the book club gives them an opportunity to devote time to something that is considered valueless in their society and thus to escape their daily lives. On the other hand, it is also due to the psychological gratification achieved by reading, which helps to sustain the possibility of loving relationships, even in the face of very different actual realities in their homes.

Radway seems to suggest that this is some form of escape into a world of illusion (or false consciousness) produced by her interviewees misunderstanding their own world because their ignorance of feminist ideas. Ang (1996: 106–107), on the other hand, argues

that “the politics of romance reading is a politics of fantasy in which women engage precisely because it does not have ‘reality value’”. Seen in this light, the aim of feminist ethnography should not be the (desire of) emancipatory liberation of the participants but a “dialogic and dialectal” (Ang, 1996: 108) creation of what a feminist identity means. Nevertheless, Radway (1991 [1984]) has largely accomplished what Morley (1999 [1980]) thought would be the best route for audience studies to follow, that is a genre-based approach, and showed that the activity of “audiencing” is worthy of attention, confirmed that readers’ ideological position and social-material circumstances influenced their understandings and, inadvertently, that the “audience” may actually achieve self-recognition precisely through the research process.

Hebdige’s (1979) study of subcultures is another example of a study that builds on the encoding/decoding model. Hebdige considers how various subcultural styles, including that of the Rastafarians, the mods, and the punks, are created and what they mean embedded in a wider society. Hebdige’s contention is that subcultures take up various elements from the many locales they exist in simultaneously and to some extent are constrained by each one of these. So their self-formation as a distinct social group is partly conscious and partly unconscious, and the bricolage they create does not

affirm only those blocked “readings” excluded from the airwaves and the newspapers (consciousness of subordinate status, a conflict model of society, etc.). They also articulate, to a greater or lesser extent, some of the preferred meanings and interpretations, those favoured by and transmitted through the authorized channels of mass communication. (Hebdige, 1979: 86)

What this quotation also shows is that Hebdige remained mostly interested in the interaction between mass media and these subcultural groups and, unlike Radway, did not conduct an ethnographic study. Very much in line with the research done at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham in the 1970s, his research was based on a structural semiological analysis of style as “text” and the context in and against which texts can be read by the researcher. Thus, his account emphasizes how the readings, which seem to be “negotiated” in almost all cases, make these subcultural groups intelligible – that is, both reassure their existence and incorporate them into the dominant ideology as its constitutive outside.

At this point my research question asked how students, faculty and university management re-negotiate the meanings of critical management education while reiterating the current structural context of increasing marketization of higher education in the UK. In order to answer this question, I also needed to ask what preferred meanings, and potentially

discursive contradictions, faculty encode in their modules and how their institutional location constrains the process of encoding.

With regards to the message, I was interested in whether the hegemonic reading of a management text or management as text change from the wider society to the micro level discourse of the CME classroom. This would have entailed detecting what readings are preferred based on students' responses and equally importantly on tutors' experiences, since "[i]f there is a homogeneity in the preferring, it's only what you can detect in terms of a pattern of preferings over a long period of time" (Hall, 1994: 263). This is an important question because the dominance of a particular ideology cannot simply be assumed on the basis of common sense, as Gramsci has argued. Common sense, which I here take preferring over time to mean, needs to be examined as a site of ideological struggle that intends to secure the more powerful, privileged, hegemonic position of a particular social group (Hall, 1983). CMS clearly tries to differentiate itself from and usually explicitly argue against the dominant ideology of neoliberal managerialism (Parker, 2002), and in this sense the CME classroom should be considered a site of conflict and maybe even subversion. But this raises the question of what a hegemonic reading of the critical classroom is, and who gets to define this; or whether such a reading exists at all. Reynolds (1999) describes three pitfalls that CME should look out for: students' resistance to ideas of CMS (which would question the micro-level hegemony); the assimilation, watering down, of CMS ideas into mainstream management discourses (that resonates with the idea that a hegemonic reading may not be established as part of the text); and the problem of (re-)entering the workplace (in which case what counts as hegemonic is transformed again).

Third, I aimed to find out how students decode these messages and, in particular, their ways of resisting the preferred reading. In particular, the need for a contextualized understanding of CME should signal that there are a variety of codes at play here, and a unified atemporal hegemonic or oppositional reading cannot be upheld. People change both in time and according to context as well as changes in discourses. This is exactly what should give hope to educators of any sort that they may have some kind of lasting influence on their students; and researchers that their particular interpretations may be regarded more "truthful" at times. The audience should not be reified in that particular role either, in a broader sense. Academics and students cannot be put into the solid categories of producers and readers as their roles in the communicative exchange often change. Teachers are as much the audience for students' reactions as vice versa.

While it has become more refined over the years and studies mentioned in this section, the encoding/decoding model still suffers from the assumption that those moments can be separated and they follow each other in time. Morley and Brunson's study after failing to establish determinate correspondences between readings and social groups concluded on the need for more dynamic explanations of how producers, artefacts and consumers interact. The language used by Hebdige brings us closer to the idea that the question of how readings are negotiated should be at the centre of inquiry as they have a constitutive effect on our world. At the same time, Radway's formation of a reading group through her research can be likened to how Hall imagines the articulation of new political subjects at a societal scale. All of this taken together with comments by my examiners at the upgrade examination, took me in the direction of articulation. This theory, in its different varieties, attempts to account for more complex and dynamic interactions between the constituent elements that are articulated together.

2.4. Articulation

Hall's theory of articulation (1977, 1980b, 1983, 1985) offers the possibility to overcome some major criticisms of the encoding/decoding model "by insisting that the components of the process (sender, receiver, message, meaning, etc.) are themselves articulations, without essential meanings or identities" (Slack, 1996: 125; see also Pillai, 1992). To better explain the concept of articulation, here I will discuss Althusser's theory of overdetermination of the social totality and Laclau and Mouffe's take on articulation through the lens of Hall's writings. Then I'll move on to consider how Grossberg and Clifford have taken up the concept more recently.

Hall (1985) re-evaluates Marx's (1973) most detailed text on methodology, the "1857 Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*, to develop his own reading of Althusser's (1969) concept of ideology in *For Marx*. As both Althusser and consequently Hall argue, Marx eventually goes beyond any simple teleological model of social change, towards what Althusser theorizes as the overdetermination of the social. Overdetermination describes an approach to social totality that postulates that more than one possible correspondence of differential positions (what Laclau and Mouffe [2001: 105] call *elements*) can result in the same social formations. In Hall's (1985) formulation this means that there is "no necessary (non-)correspondence" between any two elements of the social totality. (Including of course one's demographic position and their reading of a text, as we've seen Morley establish in the previous section.)

On the one hand, the idea of no necessary correspondence is in contrast with orthodox Marxist formulations where one's economic situation determines their class position, which in turn explains their ideological commitment. Hall's problem with the orthodox Marxist formulation is that it explains the ideological with recurrence to economic foundations, thus assigning them a secondary role. However, class position does not fully and unequivocally define and describe one's way of thinking or belonging. As such, the theory of articulation has genealogically developed in the search for a theory in the 1970-80s that does not reduce social relations and practices to a presumed economic base (mode of production or class) on the basis of the assumption of particular social groups and classes having a clearly bounded and uncomplicated self-identity (Slack, 1996; Clifford, 2001).

On the other hand, much of postmodern theorizing, by which Hall (interviewed in Grossberg, 1986) primarily means the work of Baudrillard and Foucault but also to some extent Laclau and Derrida, relies on the assumption of a necessary non-correspondence. Such a position is worrisome as it implies that any element of the social can be recombined with any other at any time, that signification is unconstrained and endless. Hall identifies such a complete destabilization in the writings of the authors above, whose works he nevertheless engages with and selectively borrows from for developing his own ideas. Hall, however, wants to hold on to the idea that the process of articulation at any point in time is limited by a range of historically formed material and ideological factors.

The assumption of no necessary correspondence then refers to the idea of any element of the social both being historically grounded by and to different social forces, in contrast with postmodern theories, and not having "necessary, intrinsic, transhistorical belongingness" (Grossberg, 1986: 54), in contrast with traditional Marxism. The legacy of Saussure's synchronic semiology, the assumption that differences between signs in a system give rise to their meanings, clearly shows in Hall's thinking when he claims that any element of the social acquires "[i]ts meaning – political and ideological [...] precisely from its position within a formation" (Grossberg, 1986: 54). If the social totality is thus overdetermined, it is worth examining (and potentially attempting to reconfigure) the actual correspondences that result in a particular social formation. In other words, it is worth inspecting how social practices result in a particular naturalized temporary fixing of meaning; that is, an ideology. Although Hall (1983: 59) defines the concept of ideology somewhat elusively in different texts, his general understanding is that it

mean[s] the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social

groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.

If ideologies and social forces get articulated together, “an ideology discovers its subject”, that, in line with making society intelligible to particular groups as the quote above shows, (re)shapes the social formation by making these groups intelligible to society as well (Grossberg, 1986: 53). “By the term ‘articulation’”, writes Hall (1985: 113 fn.2),

I mean a connection or a link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not “eternal” but has constantly to be renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to old linkages being dissolved and new connections – rearticulations – being forged.

Articulations operate by bringing together disparate elements in order to create exclusionary categories that are always inherently motivated for a political goal. This antagonism between the internal and the external, what Laclau and Mouffe call the *constitutive outside* (Laclau, 1990), is an ever-present condition and result of social practices. However, these (identity) categories are not fixed, they do not become reified as rigid binary oppositions but are rather contingent, “continuing struggles across a terrain, portions of which are captured by changing alliances, hooking and unhooking particular elements” (Clifford, 2001: 447). Articulations, and their related ideologies, function to bring a halt into this struggle – but this can only be temporary given that any actualized social totality is overflowed by its constitutive outside. Therefore, what have to be investigated are those historical developments that, first, result in “lines of tendential force” (Grossberg, 1986: 53) towards maintaining a particular version of the status quo; and, second, how these and other elements of the social create the circumstantial conditions of possibility for particular articulations.

In consequence, one aspect in which the concept of articulation goes beyond the encoding/decoding model is a theorization of how the processes that continuously re-iterate the structures that in turn constrain social practices, what Hall calls “double articulation” (1985: 95), actually make the social totality “structured in dominance” (see Althusser, 1969: 200–216). It is this structuration that will make encodings “pre-fer” (Hall, 1980a: 124) certain meanings over others (Pillai, 1992). Note that this process may be very constrained by historical developments, but there is nothing inherently natural or logical in it (Clifford, 2001: 478), as for example structuralist accounts would suggest. This is in line with Hall’s observation that the preference in the preferred message is something that can only be observed over time. And although the preferring is determining for the linked practices

articulated together, it is not determinate (Hall, 1985). It does not simply reproduce the dominant ideology, as preferred meanings also have a certain autonomy.

In light of the theory of articulation, it is understandable how what Hall originally termed the circuit of communication developed into a more generalized explanation of meaning and representation in the form of the “circuit of culture” in *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (du Gay, et al., 1997). This work provides some hints how research into articulation could be imagined by offering a detailed case study of how various processes in the circuit of culture articulated at the same time result in contingent and temporary outcomes, such as the Walkman. As the Walkman example shows, the study of articulation requires that the distinct moments of encoding/decoding are identified in order to draw up connections between them later. Hence, the circuit of culture comprises the moments of representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation.

Representation carries particular significance because it is through this that culture creates meaning. As the authors claim, the world doesn’t speak, social and cultural elements do not have inherent functions but they acquire their meaning by being embedded into semantic networks in which “[i]t is difference which signifies” (du Gay, et al., 1997: 17). The authors pay special attention to the context in which the moments of articulation take place, and show that processes of producing and consuming the Walkman actually create the context in which they become intelligible as something. For instance, the Walkman does not *reflect* some kind of Japanese design tradition, but through the Walkman as an artefact is this sense of an essentialist concept of an existing tradition created. The authors also make an argument against perceiving consumption as a completely determined, closed-ended process. They claim that production and the resulting product can be used in different ways, and it is this usage that determines the meaning of the object. If it weren’t so, then marketing, design, or advertising would all be pointless and most likely wouldn’t spend fortunes on trying to fix, or somehow determine, the meaning of the artefact in question.

At a theoretical level this means favouring the Baudrillardian concept of “identity value”, which assumes that needs are culturally created, over the early Frankfurt School understanding of “false needs”, which always has to revert to some kind of assumptions about what is “natural” and genuine to consume. Finally, a whole chapter of *Doing Cultural Studies* is devoted to a discussion of aspects of regulation in the circuit of culture. Consumers may resist certain inscriptions, but social discourses (for instance, about being in the public or antisocial behaviour) as well as actual regulations (e.g. on public transport) will often limit these attempts at resistance. Even more so, if some of these ideas are fed back into the

production process – in this case resulting in the disappearance of a second plug for headphones from the original Walkman, or smaller earplugs that at the same time extend audibility in loud environments and constrain noise emission by the listener.

Although, it was intended to serve only as a textbook example (du Gay and Madsen, 2013), the circuit of culture model has travelled beyond the confines of the book to make its way into social science and management research. In management the model gained some prominence through the cultural-economic model of public relations (Curtin and Gaither, 2005, 2007; Zhang, 2010). Curtin, Gaither and Ciszek (2015) argue that articulation theory differs from other traditional theories in PR in that it does not privilege the organization that produces, sends out and then collects feedback on a certain message. But it also differs from Marxist approaches that would place the emphasis on the production of messages. Articulation allows the researcher to think of the complex relationships between structural and organizational contexts, methods of production, and practices of consumption at the same time.

What follows from this shift of attention is a transformation of “cultural studies from a model of communication (production-text-consumption; encoding-decoding) to a theory of contexts” (Grossberg, 1993: 4). The contexts in which social practices take place and which in turn they sustain, including the processes of encoding and decoding, become sites of struggle. Hall (1994: 263) points at this contestation and variability of the encoding moment through the example of Channel 4 in the UK that had given space to minority programmes, when it used to be an alternative broadcaster and not desperately seeking the audience. Dicks (2000) actually researches this aspect of contestation in her study of the Rhondda Heritage Park in Wales, and suggests that encoding itself is a complex activity whereby the preferred meaning often emerges unifying various contested discourses. She describes how the encoding at this site drew on two sources: discourses about miners as politically active community, favoured by local Welsh professional historians, and as a reified community of the past, conceptualized by the English team of professional exhibition organizers. Consequently, coded from the inception of the message there is “a negotiation, or prevarication, in the texts, established through their conditions of production” (Dicks, 2000: 74). This idea resonates with Pillai’s insight that “[p]referred meanings and dominant ideologies need to be *articulated* through practices of encoding in order to achieve an equivalence between them” (1992: 230) but it also incorporates the claim that such a *clear* equivalence does not exist.

The indeterminacy of preferred meaning on the encoding side highlights how any decoding is actually a negotiated reading. Here the notion of articulation becomes useful in overcoming this problem of the original encoding/decoding model. Incorporating Gramsci's theory that individual ideological elements are not directly linked to any particular class, articulation assumes no necessary correspondence between one's socioeconomic position and the codes they use or readings they produce. Social classes or groups are not first internally coherent, subsequently giving rise to their group-specific ideologies, but it is the joint articulation of the social group in formation and the ideology that makes it intelligible, that creates new political subjectivities and social positions (Grossberg, 1986: 55). But if there is "prevarication" in the encoding moment, then readings cannot be assumed to be simply hegemonic or oppositional but they had better be conceptualized as "the outcome [...] of relations of relevance/irrelevance – between readers' own social positionings and interpretative frameworks, on the one hand, and the text's negotiations of the differently accented relations of encoding on the other" (Dicks, 2000: 74; see also Morley, 1981).

It is this idea of complexity that both Clifford and Grossberg focus on their own take on articulation. If there is no internal truth to the elements that are articulated together, then it is not only meanings and codes that are negotiated but, more fundamentally, the constitutive elements too. The world becomes a negotiated space. Building on Gramsci, articulation theory

understands frontier effects, the lining up of friends and enemies, us and them, insiders and outsiders, on one side or another of a line, as tactical. Instead of rigid confrontations – civilized and primitive, bourgeois and proletarian, white and black, men and women, West and Third World, Christian and pagan – one sees continuing struggles across a terrain, portions of which are captured by different alliances, hooking up and unhooking particular elements. There's a lot of middle ground. (Clifford, 2013: 59)

Tracing the co-emergence of indigenous movements and global neoliberalism in the 1990s, Clifford (2013) narrates partial histories of the more-than-local: ones that are rooted and routed in specific interactions of the global and the local and while big enough to be comparable to other such histories, they do not point towards any unified and universal future. He calls this kind of inquiry ethnographic realism, which "works to represent material constraints, intersecting histories, and emerging social forms without imposing structural closure or developmental destiny" (Clifford, 2013: 27). Articulation for Clifford is strictly a process – and not a particular state or singular event. It is a process that brings together struggles for power at the global, nation state, and local levels with all the alignments, alliances, and constraints these present to each other thereby also bringing together what we

usually conceptualize as distinct periods of past, present and future. Importantly for Clifford, “interpellations and articulations occur simultaneously, in specific relations of power” (2013: 37). The nation state may channel the recognition of a particular indigenous group as a diaspora but this articulation opens up new possibilities of political action and resistance. These may be different to how we understood what used to count as counterhegemonic, and what we might romantically cling onto still, but they present new potentialities for rearticulation.

How we understand practices, actions and events, all depends on the contexts that come together in their occurrence. Grossberg, refers to this as the project of constructing “a political history of the present” but “do[ing] so in a particular way, a radically contextualist way, in order to avoid reproducing the very sorts of universalisms (and essentialisms) that all too often characterize the dominant practices of knowledge production” (2006: 2). Cultural studies, paying homage to its roots in structural semiotics I discussed in Section 2.2, understands relationality as “contextuality: that the identity, significance, and effects of any practice or event (including cultural practices and events) are defined only by the complex set of relations that surround, interpenetrate, and shape it, and make it what it is” (Grossberg, 2010: 20). Radical contextualism in his view assumes not taking for granted what contexts are, rather it accounts for their co-constitutive relationality with other contexts, including those that we usually describe as events, facts, identities, etc. Grossberg (2013: 35) postulates “that there are at least three ways of constituting contexts, three modalities of contextuality, three logics of contextualisation: milieu (or location), territory (or place) and region (or ontological epoch)”.

Milieus (or locations) can be conceptualized as “a ‘sociological’ context, a material and discursive assemblage of political, economic, social and cultural practices, structures and events” (Grossberg, 2013: 37). These elements make up the milieu that at the same time makes it possible for the elements to exist. Second, territories (or places) create a certain articulated homogeneity between different parts of the milieus. As the affective “context of lived reality” places “are different ways of living in already socially determined locations, different possibilities of the forms and configurations of belonging and identification, structuration and change, security and constraint, subjectification and agency” (Grossberg, 2013: 37). Finally, region (or ontological epoch) defines the potential ways of being at any certain time from which power struggles will determine what actual places and locations come to existence.

Having introduced my theoretical framework, in the next chapter I turn to what these two approaches mean in the case of my own research. First, I discuss what the questions are that need to be addressed about the articulation of a critically-oriented business school. Then, I move on to describe the methodological choices, informed by cultural studies, that I made to gather and analyse data for answering these questions. Finally, I present some reflections on the research process, its outcome, and its potential futures.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The trajectory outlined in the previous sections has ended with a new set of research questions focused on a variety of contexts and their interactions, as described below. The chapter then includes a justification for using a case study approach combined with an ethnographic approach, further seasoned with autoethnographic elements. A short description of and justification for the sites I selected follows, with a further discussion of the sampling and data construction methods. Next I discuss my approach to data analysis that underpins the notion of quality that can be only ever so vaguely defined in qualitative research. The chapter finishes with a critical reflection on the ethical decisions I had to make throughout this research, especially in terms of anonymity and exposure, and their relationship to what is institutionally expected as proof of being an ethical researcher.

Understanding articulation, following Clifford (2013), as a process of intended and unintended actions that brings together different levels and points in time, I have the following question for this research: *How is a critically-oriented school of business and management articulated?* This entails two further investigations. First, how do certain historical developments that result in “lines of tendential force” (Grossberg, 1986: 53) act towards maintaining a particular version of the status quo? Second, how do these tendencies and other elements of the social create the circumstantial conditions of possibility for particular articulations?

More precisely with regards to this project:

- (1) In what social contexts can business and management schools emerge as critical?
- (2) What are the discourses in which such an identification becomes intelligible, where its conditions of existence become fashionable?

- (3) How do the contexts they participate in maintaining enable and constrain the practices at self-identified critically-oriented schools of business management?
- (4) Where can we find the continuing struggle Clifford points to that determines the tactical meaning of “critical”?

3.1. Methodological considerations

To investigate these questions, my overall research design required that I capture both perceptions and meanings as understood by research participants and the various contexts – places, spaces, and regions as outlined by Grossberg (2013) – that make possible and structure these perceptions, which in turn are structured by them. This meant adopting a qualitative approach to answer questions of “what”, “how”, and “why” (Watson, 2011) through the in-depth investigation of preconceived themes, while being open enough to allow for new themes to emerge. To this end, research on articulation has built on an eclectic, though not haphazard, approach to using particular methods and samples. As Grossberg (2013) puts it, the goal of research is precisely to find out and construct one’s research question. In my case, the means leading to this end, as discussed below, have included ethnographic methods: observations, interviews, and document analysis. In this chapter, I present my methodological choices, some of them necessitated by the theoretically-driven change described in Chapter 2. I describe the research process in detail to increase my account’s rigour and convincingness by making my judgements open to observation and evaluation (Cresswell and Miller, 2000).

This is especially important as, in line with constructivist assumptions in cultural studies, I do not regard data as something objectively accessible lying around waiting for the researcher to discover it. As van Maanen (2011: 222) succinctly puts it, “One could not pick up rocks without some sort of theory”. Most research in the field of management unquestionably assumes a straightforward relationship between facts as evidence that can be used to construct cause-and-effect relationships between participants, actions, and outcomes (for a notable exception that presents a conscious engagement with the foundational claims of positivism, see Donaldson, 2005). Neither is mine a neo-empiricist endeavour, like grounded theory, that would presume that an ever closer description of true knowledge is achievable by science done well (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 61ff). Rather, as highlighted in Chapter 2, I am interested in how knowledge that appears to be true, which then comes to structure the world, is created. Any such claim to truth is imbued with power, which however

does not mean that those in power can claim absolutely anything (Foucault, 1990). As Hall (in Grossberg, 1986) comments on Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) approach, not everything can be articulated with everything else as if there were no material bases and ideological barriers to stop the infinite play of signifiers. Grossberg's (2013) tripartite differentiation of socio-material descriptors, lived realities, and regimes of truth, presents a framework of different contexts that each allow and constrain certain articulations. Even then, researchers do not have access to a disembodied position from which to judge these articulations but they provide situated accounts (Haraway, 1988). That is, research accounts are not only "partial truths" (Clifford, 1986) with the researcher necessarily making judgements about what to include and leave out as well as how to interpret certain "data" but they are also politicized from the situated position the researcher occupies. Thus, research accounts necessarily, even if only implicitly, expose a "locational politics of reflexivity" (Marcus, 1994: 403).

Consequently, what counts as data, which segments of the material and social world appear (not) to be important, is a result of co-construction between myself and research participants. As Stables (2006: 381–382) puts it,

There are a couple of other unsettling things that should, perhaps, be said about social and educational research. The first is that its "data" are not real observable entities but rather processes and perceptions. [...] "Data" in language come pre-packaged in meaning, so really "data" here is a complete misnomer. In education, and other disciplines too, we do not observe phenomena as recognizable patterns of data; we observe (or interpret) phenomena and call them data.

Furthermore, while I study how research participants and their contexts co-create each other, I become part of that context and co-creation. To account for this, I use elements of autoethnography that allow me to capture the situated and partial nature of my "findings". The methodological route that led to constructing my partial account of this case is the topic of the rest of this chapter. I first discuss my choice to find an answer to my research questions using an ethnographic case study. Then describe how data was co-constructed in my research with the participants in an ethnographic fieldwork complemented with interviews, and why I think that observations and interviews can provide data in which answers to my research questions can be found. The third section details how I went on to analyse the data combining thematic analysis and deconstruction in different doses and at different times. Finally, I reflect on some ethical questions that I had to face during the research process.

Research strategy: an ethnographic case study

I employed an ethnographic case study approach as my research strategy (Hartley, 2004) to be able to illuminate daily activities and their meanings for the research participants. “Strategy” in this expression highlights the personal, political and ethical, choices I made before and during this research, unlike the term “methodology” would that connotes a less embodied, more universal, more positivist approach to research (see Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 166–167, 201). A case study allows the researcher to develop a detailed understanding of organizational processes through gathering and analysing contextually rich data using a variety of methods (Hartley, 2004). My aim has been to consider how criticality is constructed in the sites examined and analyse how research participants negotiate its meaning. Thus, my case study used elements of each type in Yin’s (2003) classification of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies including all of the “who”, “what”, “where”, “how” and “why” types of questions. My three sites were typical of business schools that have a social science and humanities-influenced approach to management education but different to most other business schools in the world. They were similar in that they highlighted critically-oriented scholars’ struggles within contemporary business schools. Altogether they could also be considered a “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 77–81), which addresses related possible social configurations by confirming or rejecting certain shared propositions. For instance, we might hypothesize that if management education and organizational practices are not critically-oriented in this case then they won’t be in most other business schools either.

My approach to case study research, what I propose to call a *contrastive case study*, represents a combination of single and comparative case studies. Yin (2003: 53–54) sees the main benefit of having comparative cases in the increased generalizability of findings, given that the cases exhibit certain similarities despite their differing contexts. However, Yin (2003: 40–41) also considers the use of a single case justified if it shows some unique or rare circumstances. Flyvbjerg (2006: 228) argues that “the force of example” of a single case may advance our understanding of social phenomena as much as generalization can. My case contained three distinct sites – a main one and two minor ones to “develop contrasts” (Hartley, 2004: 326). While conducting a study of a particular workers’ strike organization, Hartley and her colleagues (1983) spent some days at two in many respects very similar sites, which helped them recognize important differences to their main site. In naming this approach a contrastive case study, I draw on the distinction between comparative linguistics and contrastive linguistics (Lado, 1957). The former focuses on the similarities between

languages due to their shared historical development, while the latter emphasizes the differences that exist at any given time. My contrastive case study used participants' insights at two minor sites to provide an external mirror to self-descriptions and narratives at the main site, to highlight differences, and to help me unfamiliarize the familiar.

Using a contrastive case study retained some benefits of having more cases, as comparison “makes possible the dialectical interplay between our knowledge of the familiar and our desire to understand the unfamiliar” (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 204–205). The insights gained from the minor sites formed a structural part of my observations and analysis of the case overall; therefore, these are not analysed separately as they would be in a comparative case. This design also addressed two problems of comparative case studies. First, having several cases could have potentially led to insufficient depth of engagement considering the time limitations for my doctoral research. Second, comparison might have exclusively focused my attention on the comparable elements. Rejecting its benefits, Stake (2005: 457) describes

formally defined comparison as actually competing with learning about and from the particular case. Comparison is a grand epistemological strategy, a powerful conceptual mechanism, fixing attention upon one or a few attributes. Thus, it obscures any case knowledge that fails to facilitate comparison. Comparative description is the opposite of what Geertz (1973) called “thick description”.

To allow for thick description, I approached my main site ethnographically to study the social worlds of groups through “events, language, rituals, institutions, behaviors, artifacts, and interactions” (Cunliffe, 2010: 227). Ethnography is a prime method used in cultural studies and increasingly common in organizational research. Though I paid equal attention to interview data in my case study, which is thus ethnographic in nature but not an outright ethnography, doing fieldwork allowed me to be in close relationship with the group, move in the same spaces, and experience daily life beyond formal interviews thus capturing events, practices, or feelings that otherwise would likely have remained hidden to me. In line with my largely poststructuralist research philosophy and the research questions I wanted to investigate, I adopted a “critical” approach to ethnography (Cunliffe, 2010), which aims to uncover power relations amongst group members and their contexts, to explain how ideologies, discourses, material relations shape the group's world. Although I used ethnographic methods,

I chose my research sites from a handful of business and management schools in the UK that are known in some form to be affiliated to CMS as I explain below. This knowledge is often circulated implicitly amongst the academics in this academic field who shared it with

me when I was deciding upon the sites for my study. Nevertheless, some published examples explicitly mention certain business schools, which at least should give an indication to those not familiar with this field. One of the first lists appears in Parker (2002: 218 fn.4) who writes, “At the present time, and at the risk of hubris, Keele is probably the most pre-eminent amongst [departments with a critical mass of critical researchers], but Cambridge, Essex, Exeter, King’s, Lancaster, Strathclyde, UMIST and Warwick might also be identified as places with smaller colonies”. Adler, Forbes and Willmott, writing in 2007, claim that there are “a number of management departments and business schools whose philosophy and/or faculty are explicitly ‘critical’ in orientation (e.g., the business school at Queen Mary’s, University of London [...]) and which offer MPhil/PhD study in Critical Management (University of Lancaster Management School [...])” (2007: 123).

Rowlinson and Hassard (2011: 677) note that of the contributors to the *Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies* (Alvesson, Bridgman and Willmott, 2009) most work at Cardiff, Leicester, and Queen Mary’s. Antunes and Thomas (2007: 389) mention that “schools such as Leicester, with its focus on a critical school of management and a critical MBA, stress linkages between the humanities and social science research”. And while Grey (2007: 468, see also Grey, 2004: 183 fn.10) also mentions Leicester as “the clearest example which comes to mind”, he adds that “institutions which are openly and explicitly devoted to a CMES approach [...] are very rare”. In addition, International CMS Conferences indicate some form of affiliation as non-published evidence, which have been hosted by Edge Hill University, Leicester, Manchester, Warwick, Cambridge and Lancaster. Often, though, it is only a few loosely or closely affiliated members of a business school who would set up a research group, or a particular department of a bigger school that would be known for its orientation. Although (departments of) business schools adopting some form of critical approaches to management are certainly not an exclusively UK phenomenon (see Grey et al., 2016), compared even only to the 1,000 ranked by Eduniversal (2016) globally, they are very few in number indeed.

These sources mostly date from 2007 to 2009, and as such provide a snapshot of the situation at that time. However, many academics move between universities every few years in the UK and deans and heads of department can also re-orient the business school, which explains the change from Parker’s list. This results in a relatively fast-changing topography of “critical” institutions with a movement between dispersion and concentration at different times and places. Compared to the 101 institutions submitted to the Research Excellence Framework in 2014 (see Chapter 4), most scholars in the field would normally mention

around 10 institutions that have a critical mass of like-minded scholars at any single time as the limited number of schools mentioned in the literature also shows. This made selecting research sites a complicated matter in 2013 because two potential schools were undergoing severe changes in their orientation due to new strategic directions set for the business schools by university management. The main and minor sites discussed below were eventually chosen based on the topography at the time, formally and informally discussed with my supervisors and upgrade examiners.

I am aware that the following descriptions might seem somewhat vague, this however is necessary to fulfil my commitment to confidentiality. I must note at this point, with regard to adhering to my University's ethical clearance, that I used pseudonyms for the universities, departments, people, and some organizational bodies in the thesis. This is done to ensure, to the extent that this is possible, that my respondents remain unrecognizable. Such perceived necessity of confidentiality as anonymity stems from the Nuremberg Code (Bell and Wray-Bliss, 2009: 83) but its "where appropriate" criterion is rarely discussed in research ethics guidelines of British universities nowadays (see Section 3.2). When coupled with a case study methodology or small sample size, a potentially unintended effect of anonymization includes the homogenization of people and institutions.

Specifically, as Gibson Burrell notes (personal communication, 7 October 2013, used with permission), understanding "business management" as management researchers' theoretical object, the decision whether to call an institution a "business school" or a "management school", is far from being completely disinterested. The name "business school" conveys the idea, based on the view of Tom Lupton a former Dean of Manchester Business School, that out of the great variety of organizations we find in the world – for-profit, non-profit, NGOs, governmental bodies, co-operatives, communes, etc. – it is the industry-oriented practices that the school is interested in at all levels from the individual to the social/global. Conversely, "management school" implies the extension of investigation to a variety of organizations but limits its scope in terms of levels to middle managers, managerial elites, and employed labour. With this fine difference already disappearing, in a move dictated by (likely utopian) long-term optimism, I decided to call my three sites "schools of organizing" (Parker, 2016). Such schools would concentrate on (the history of) social practices of organizing in different ways in various contexts, performatively highlighting alternatives to common sense ideology. While I made up the pseudonyms of the three schools myself, my respondents' names were randomly picked from the list of the most popular names for newborns in the UK in 2012, when this project was conceived.

My main case study site, Flatshire University School of Organizing (FUSO), is a relatively small institution. Flatshire University, a research-oriented university in the UK with its charter from the mid-20th century, in recent years has prided itself on being inclusive – made easier by its location in an ethnically mixed mid-sized city. The campus is located in the city centre and with its approx. 18,000 students at all levels and over 3,500 employees, it is one of the bigger universities in the country (HESA, 2016). FUSO operated as a research centre of the Department of Economics throughout the 1990s and was transformed into a separate body in the mid-2000s. This also increased the size of FUSO from around 10-20 full-time staff members in the 1990s to the 107 listed on its website in June 2016. Both FUSO's and the University's leaders have considered an organic relationship advantageous as opposed to increasing separation. As a relative latecomer amongst business schools, Flatshire University found it important to find a particular edge for FUSO. On its website, it openly supported critical approaches to studying organization and management in 2013, which public pitch was later changed to emphasize a multi-disciplinary approach. Several FUSO members have published in, are (former) editors of, or are on the editorial board of journals hospitable to critical, interdisciplinary, and social scientific approaches to management; including *Culture and Organization*, *ephemera*, *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Human Relations*, *Organization*, *Organization Studies*, *TAMARA*, *Turbulence*, and *Work, Employment and Society*, amongst others. Besides, the School is signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

A minor site of my research is Massix University School of Organizing (MUSO), and particularly its subject group related to management and organisation. Massix University was founded in the mid-20th century with the purpose of students living on a countryside campus and being continuously exposed to the bustling research environment. Possibly due to this more closely-knit community, the university is known to be committed to intellectual debate and for radical student politics for decades after its foundation. Its strength in social science research may have influenced the development of MUSO and that particular subject group in the direction of treating management as a social science and giving importance to ethics. Out of the roughly 12,000 students more than 2,000 are registered with MUSO, and of the 2,500 staff members 93 are listed on the MUSO website (with 30 in the mentioned subject group). Many of its staff are also affiliated with the journals listed above and MUSO is a PRME signatory too. In 2013, MUSO was undergoing a minor crisis of strategic direction following the appointment of a new dean. Thus, although he was replaced shortly afterwards, during my research interviews some respondents expressed their doubt regarding the future

of the subject group's orientation and some scholars either left or were reportedly looking for opportunities elsewhere.

The third site, Woodham University Business School (WUSO), is the newest critically-oriented project of the three. Woodham University is located on the outskirts of a small city in the UK. In terms of size, it is between the other two, with around 17,000 students and over 3,000 staff members. WUSO was founded decades earlier than the other two schools and has gained "triple accreditation" recognition.⁴ Scholars at WUSO who use critical theories can become members of a recognized but loose research group. The group was formed not long before I started this research and it currently lists 19 members out of 157 in the school. As such, WUSO provided a form of counterpoint to MUSO in that its practices and institutional recognition are still in development. Its recent foundation, lack of long-standing institutionalization, and arguably its relatively smaller size meant that the group was more accepted, even supported, by the dean and other university leaders, and enjoyed a more stable position than what could be felt at either FUSO or MUSO during my research.

A final aspect that allowed for interesting contrastive insights is that most of my respondents knew several others at the other research sites, which is not very surprising in a small academic community. Moreover, some of them had done research or written publications with scholars at the others and a few even moved between these three schools over the years. I could expect that such members of staff would have a personal understanding of more than one of my research sites and would be able to compare their experiences.

In the field: data construction

On (auto)ethnography

The major part of my data collection was an extended period of participant observation and interviewing at FUSO between October 2013 and December 2014. During the same time period I also worked there and, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, an underlying motivation for my research was to understand why I was interested in CMS and whether my perception would change in a generally critically-oriented school. I recorded such personal reflections

⁴ Triple accreditation by the international organisations of AMBA, EQUIS, and AACSB, as explained in Chapter 4, validates certain business school programmes and processes against a set of criteria, thereby certifying the institution's education provision. The point rather being, of course, to attract more students, especially to MBA programmes with high fees.

and other observations, thoughts, feelings in field notes that I used for the analysis and developed into the stories presented throughout the thesis. As an “overt full member” (Bryman, 2016: 434) of one of the three schools (i.e. a Graduate Teaching Assistant with all the duties, liberties and constraints of this role who is open about researching the organization), I observed topics, interactions, manners of speech, seating arrangements, and so on at a variety of public, semi-public, and closed events and meetings; at classes taught by staff members; at conferences; and certain irregular events as common in ethnographic fieldwork (van Maanen, 2011). Fieldwork opened some surprising doors to me as a researcher, in terms of being granted access to meetings and confidential documents that would not normally be accessible to doctoral students or even to some staff members. At times colleagues approached me on the corridor saying “you must hear this”, fieldwork included discussing the latest gossip about Flatshire University in the pub, but also navigating the exquisite networks of power that colleagues, supervisors, research participants, PhD directors, etc. can sometimes very emphatically accentuate.

My formal involvement in the daily life of FUSO likely closed some doors too. The fact that the Head of School gave my research the green light may have deterred some people. Understanding the School as a semi-public space, the Head circulated an email in which I introduced my research and main areas of interest and asked everyone to either raise their questions or concerns with me or my supervisors. Fortunately (and potentially due to the sender), nobody opted out of the observation part of the research, which would have presented a hardly resolvable puzzle. I also made research participants aware that my supervisors, members of the same organization, would only ever receive my drafts using pseudonyms. At the meetings I visited, I always attempted to introduce myself and explain why I was present. On two occasions, though, the chair of the meeting decided to give me approval without providing space for introduction, which made me feel both worried about potential consequences with regard to not having secured explicit approval and annoyed at being denied the opportunity to perform being a(n ethical) researcher.

As a member of the student body and academic staff, I was implicated in the research and the account I produced just as much as I own it. Being part of the topic I investigate made my study autoethnographic in nature. Alvesson (2003) argues for the use of self-ethnography (a form of analytical autoethnography, discussed below) in familiar research contexts, especially in higher education. He lists the following advantages: “good research economy”, “rich empirical accounts”, “reflexivity”, it “avoid[s] the problem of the Other” and “reduce[s] the political-ethical problem of solely doing research ‘downwards’” (Alvesson,

2003: 188–189). While I don't believe that autoethnography avoids othering – actually it can make such processes more explicit as I discuss later, the other advantages have inspired my choice to use autoethnographic elements.

A crucial methodological concern of autoethnography is the estrangement of “the agonizingly familiar” (Bell and King, 2010: 432). Examining this common metaphor, do Mar Pereira (2012) argues that “frame” may be a better device for understanding choices by researchers of academic life as the idea of defamiliarization can too easily mask over the researcher's implication in their own epistemic position. Frame, however, expresses both how one perceives data in their particular research, and that research participants (especially academics) are framers of the same social world. Despite this critique – which I sympathize with at a conceptual level –, do Mar Pereira (2012: 197) also ends up talking about “‘re-educating’ [her] brain and body” and changing her habits in order to be able to observe these frames. This in my view amounts to distancing the familiar, both in terms of what is observed and how this is done. Alvesson (2003: 184ff) uses the metaphor of “creating breakdowns” using (self-)irony and unconventional theories, reflexively creating various interpretations at different levels, and paying explicit attention to the researcher's fragmented self as ways of defamiliarizing the lived.

Focusing on the self/auto element, one technique he omits, is the presentation of one's analysis to the participants (see Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011; Sparkes, 2007) and also colleagues, friends, and other audiences (Bell and King, 2010) to comment on and thereby influence it; something that has become customary in autoethnographic research. Once in the public realm, if it is read as a final account of how things are, this thesis will likely contribute to the solidification of current conceptions about the three schools, at least among the academics who read my account. I have tried to discourage this by writing in a way that keeps questions open and reveals the contingency of my own accounts. Indeed, it is by seeking critique through discussions with my supervisors, colleagues, and research participants that I introduced an element of reflection into “my” work. While I take full responsibility for what appears written here (which still will often be read as a “final account”), it was developed in interaction.

In autoethnographic work there is a constant need of balancing the evocative (Ellis and Bochner, 2006) and analytic (Anderson, 2006) aspects. Focusing exclusively on the prior can make the story more powerful but at once mask or leave unexplored the ideologies that produce a certain text (Learmonth and Humphreys, 2011). Others argue that autoethnography should be more analytical and connected to research on social phenomena

other than the researcher themselves (Alvesson, 2003; Anderson, 2006; Delamont, 2009). My approach is closer to this as I aim to produce a “layered account” of my “experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature”, and focus less on “facets of storytelling (e.g., character and plot development), showing and telling, and alterations of authorial voice” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). For me autoethnography provides a way to reflect on how my research is done and how I am implicated in what I “find” while – owing to the genre of PhD theses – presenting part of the “painful process” that readers might not normally see (Czarniawska, 2016: 4).

Semi-structured interviews

I complemented observations with semi-structured interviews with students, staff, and university management at FUSO and staff members alone at MUSO and WUSO. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes with the ones in the beginning running longer due to their more explanatory nature regarding certain organizational processes. While most interviews were pre-arranged, by breaking down boundaries (Heyl, 2001), ethnography allows for such discussions that in other contexts might be called spontaneous interviews. (Whenever I used such data, I sought consent after the conversation.) As the research progressed, interviews with staff members also became a vehicle to discuss some of my initial observations and analysis. Naturally, interview topics and my respondents’ perspectives also influenced what I “saw” during my observations at Flatshire. Additionally, in preparation for the interviews, whenever possible, I also analysed module materials regarding topics, textbooks, and teaching methods. At the institutional level, I looked at the schools’ websites (the “About us” and undergraduate management programme pages), brochures, and any available account of the history of the given school or university. My aim was twofold. I mainly wanted to get a general idea about the research sites and to spot any salient differences between them, for use at the interviews and my discussion of the institutional context but not for systematic analysis. In addition, marketing materials indicate the official discourse promoted by the institution about itself (Prichard, 2000) in relation to which subjects will situate themselves (see Chapter 5).

Altogether, I conducted 45 semi-structured “active interviews” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004) with fully employed staff members at FUSO (21), MUSO (5) and WUSO (5) as well as university senior managers (5) and students (9) at FUSO. Building on Holstein and Gubrium (2004), I conceptualized both interviewees and myself as active participants in the research. Understood ontologically, “[m]eaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning,

or simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 141). Focusing on “how” meaning is created – and not only “what” is said – is equally important. As Holstein and Gubrium (2004: 145) explain, “the subject behind the respondent not only holds facts and details of experience, but, in the very process of offering them up, constructively adds to, takes away from, and transforms them into artifacts of the occasion”. Moreover, from a poststructuralist position, the interview process creates – reiterates (Butler, 1990) – the respondent-subject and the social world they describe.

Such an understanding of interviews also transforms what in more conventional positivist approaches is considered the validity of the data obtained. Here repetition of facts in different settings becomes meaningless as it is the context of the interview and the interaction that takes place between the actors involved that constructs the data. An interview is a staged talk just like any “natural” discussion. Consequently, “the validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to meaning held within the respondent, but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 145). One of these realities, as mentioned above, were the subjects of both myself and my respondents, who often constituted themselves as “co-experts” (do Mar Pereira, 2012). This sometimes involved giving me advice during interviews and in other situations about certain theories I should use, explanations of particular events in the organization, or even asking me what kinds of quantifiable targets I have set to measure the success of teaching. Especially this latter case, with a senior professor, propelled me to re-constitute myself as the researcher, by responding that I am not interested in numerically expressible goal attainment for the purposes of this study.

Miller and Glassner (2004) state that interviews are such reality-constructing interactions in which society’s views are often challenged by interviewees to create their own social world. This can happen through “cultural stories” that “talk back” to societal ideas about the group, or via “collective stories”, which privilege the social world over society and create a homogenous space in which the group exists. And while I certainly found that much of my respondents’ social world operates on the basis of juxtaposition and exclusion as the following chapters will demonstrate, I also found that it is much harder to determine who the “collective” and “society” are than Miller and Glassner (2004) suggest. More precisely, there is a need to situate the world that is created in interview situations in (and against) different contexts – in my case, when it comes to talking about stereotypical perceptions of

society or the University or other scholars; thereby creating a variety of social worlds, in the plural, which my respondents inhabit.

Interviews with full-time academic staff members

Interviews with staff members served the goals of eliciting participants' explanations and perceptions of organizational processes, and explorations regarding how they negotiate criticality in their research, teaching, and administrative activities as well as outside work. Inasmuch as CME aims at introducing students to non-conventional ways of thinking and set of ideas (see Chapter 7), I used module materials as a point of entry to these discussions operating under the assumption that such materials represent particular aims of management educators with regards to criticality. Another entry point was often participants' decision to join their school. Topics discussed included their perception of the school, the modules they teach and the methods they use, the changes universities and business schools within them have been undergoing in the UK, and CMS. With respect to criticality, I was primarily interested in how they believed this was reflected in their teaching, but also in their research as well as other daily activities in the school.

At FUSO, using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), I first selected interview participants from amongst those in decision-making positions, presently or in the past, as well as module leaders of core and selected other courses on the BA programme. However, as the research proceeded and certain themes became more important than others, I realized that my questions could possibly be better answered if I abandoned this original sampling along the lines of formal organizational authority, and instead attempted to cover a variety of other aspects. Such "maximum variation (heterogeneity)" sample (Patton, 2002: 234) is commonly used in organizational ethnographies (e.g. Casey, 1995) as it allows the researcher to both present a rich description of the unique units of analysis and bring attention to shared themes across larger parts of the heterogeneous sample (Patton, 2002).⁵ The additional dimensions I adopted included, importantly as some fault lines discussed in Chapter 5 started to emerge, gender and academic field but also tenure at FUSO. The composition of my respondents can be seen in Table 3.1 below – with 12 members from the Organization

⁵ This shift in sampling shows some superficial similarity to "theoretical sampling" used in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014: 192–224). However, both my reason (to increase heterogeneity) and purpose (to gather more data about certain empirical themes) clearly set my sampling approach apart from grounded theory's aim of developing theoretical categories and eventually reaching theoretical saturation.

Studies group, 2 from Innovation and Technology, 3 from Marketing, 2 from Work and Employment, and 2 from Finance and Accounting.

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Teaching Fellow	0	1
Lecturer	4	4
Senior Lecturer	3	1
Professor	1	7

Table 3.1 Gender of academic staff member interview participants at FUSO

The decision to concentrate on staff members who are fully employed may be seen as a controversial one as it excludes both contracted temporary tutors and the big number of PhD students who teach most seminars. However, full-time staff members are the ones who carry out all three activities of research, teaching, and administration as well as who can actively shape the organization by participating at or withdrawing from various meetings. An even bigger limitation of my study emerges if one considers the role and sheer number of administrative staff at FUSO who I did not have the chance to interview apart from some casual chats and observations, due to time concerns, already having a huge amount of data, and the organizational separation between the Head of School and the Head of Administration (see Chapter 4).

At the minor case study sites, I conducted interviews with staff members only. Leaving discussions with students aside was justified by my interest not in how criticality was negotiated at MUSO and WUSO with their own students, but how staff felt about their own school compared to their idea of what Flatshire was like. On the other hand, university management at levels comparable to FUSO was not accessible to me. In fact, participants at the minor sites and others I talked to outside of my formal research were often surprised and praised my luck in getting approval for my research (with members of the senior management of Flatshire University in particular).

My selection of respondents followed the ideas outlined above but used variations of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). At Woodham University, I had a gatekeeper who I contacted first and who enthusiastically shared my call with the rest of their research group. I then had six respondents contact me willing to participate. Eventually, due to a misunderstanding about meeting in someone's office or at another location, one of these

interviews could not take place and unfortunately the person in question could not talk to me later. Whether this was because they felt hurt by what was ultimately my mistake or because the timing wasn't right, I could never find out; however, this incident alerted me to the importance of double checking and following up on dates and locations with interview participants. At Massix University, I did not have such a gatekeeper, which was largely due to the changes and uncertainties taking place at the time, as discussed in the previous section. Thus, my supervisors suggested a few people to contact as initial respondents, who I asked for further suggestions. In the end, I managed to conduct five interviews in total, while not hearing back ever from three several people who I contacted via email. My questions in each case were similar to those at FUSO but with a section added about their perception of the main case study site.

Interviews with undergraduate students

While the encoding-decoding model would constitute students as consumers in the educational exchange in contemporary business schools, this popular discourse is one to challenge. Students actively contribute to any form of education as producers (Neary and Winn, 2009; Neary and Hagyard, 2011) and consumers of knowledge who re-negotiate the meaning of criticality in their education: adopt it, adapt to it and the expectations they face but also adapt it to fit into their own explanations of the world. On the other hand, staff members and university managers also anticipate students' meaning-making and would act upon it before it actually takes place thereby influencing what can happen and what is provided – in terms of institutional marketing, module content, etc. – that can then be re-negotiated (see Chapter 7). Studying articulation involved investigating how different contexts map onto each other, which I started mapping by asking students about their experiences at FUSO over the three years, particular modules they mentioned as interesting or challenging for some reason, their perception of classes, teaching and their peers, and some elements of the interviews with staff members.

Research participants were self-selected from third-year undergraduate students at FUSO. By their graduation year students have taken the core modules and have had 3 years of “exposure” to allegedly critical or social science-informed approaches to management that can be expected to leave some kind of imprint on students' understanding. Most research done to date focuses on MBA students and some on PhD students who are not versed in critical theory (see Chapter 1). Perriton and Singh (2016: 81) attribute this focus on post-experience and postgraduate students to the importance placed on reflexivity in CMS and its

roots in radical adult education in the UK. But as postgraduate studies become less post-experience and increasingly resemble the educational characteristics of undergraduate education (Perriton, 2014), my research can provide valuable insights for the future that complement the existing examples of research with undergraduates (for instance, Dehler, 2009; Fournier, 2006; Welsh and Murray, 2003). Although master's students certainly contribute to the revenues of FUSO (and any other business school) immensely, which makes them an important source of revenue for the institution, most of these students finish in one year. Furthermore, curricula at postgraduate level rely considerably less on seminar teaching – where students and instructors would have an opportunity to more intensely discuss their views on management.

At the beginning, I opted for focus groups as the methodology to research students' perception of their education. Focus groups have been characterized as appropriate for identifying the common meanings in groups as they are negotiated through social interactions in particular contexts (Wilkinson, 1999) and they also yield data on how members make meaning of their experiences (Carey and Asbury, 2012). I wanted to conduct 4-5 focus groups with 5-7 participants each (altogether approximately 10 per cent of all third-year undergraduate students). Such a group size would have been optimal for collecting rich data (Carey and Asbury, 2012). I sought to keep groups diverse while assuming that the influence of being international or “home” student on their perception of criticality diminishes by the third undergraduate year.

However, during the planning stage it appeared very difficult to find enough participants and even more so to arrange focus groups. From the outset, I attempted to plan things carefully – considering timing, students' duties, their essay deadlines and holiday times. Still, there were only three responses altogether to my email sent out to all third-year students. To increase the number of participants, I visited four seminars and a mandatory and asked some colleagues to distribute a leaflet I made at their own seminars too. Eventually, six students were willing to participate but getting close to the exam period, I had to abandon the focus group idea. I reverted to around 30-minute long semi-structured interviews that mostly took place in Flatshire University's Library. At the start of the new academic year in October 2014, I made another attempt at finding some respondents and managed to have interviews with another 3 students.

Why students self-selected themselves and how this affects the data gathered is an important, though hardly answerable, question. One of them attended my seminar but marking had finished months before the interview took place. I asked all of them why they

responded to my call, and got very diverse responses: to share their very positive or negative views about FUSO (maybe having a “voice” or a form of exhibitionism); to help out a sympathetic researcher or being referred to me by their dissertation supervisors (potentially a sense of duty); to learn about answering in a relatively stress-free interview situation about their past education – something I offered them as possibly the only practical gain they can get out of participating. Consequently, this study offers an admittedly limited view of students’ experiences and in Chapter 7 I discuss the fact that most students didn’t (want to) participate in my research. I can only speculate whether this is representative of something in itself and/or whether students I spoke to are representative of the larger student population.

The institutional and national policy context

Since business schools and management academics both contribute to and are shaped by national and global developments of academia, it was difficult to precisely delimit what belongs to this context and where to stop examining it. Therefore, I referred to other scholars’ studies of the context in an explanatory way whenever this surfaced in the analysis. Context included various influences, such as new public management (Davies and Thomas, 2002), the increasing marketization of and managerialism in the academic sector (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007), and the relationship of the university and the business school (see Chapter 4). This review informed the questions I asked from university managers who participated in my study. While I cannot provide details about who exactly they were, I managed to talk to senior staff at Flatshire University. My primary interest lay in how they framed their ideas about FUSO and interpreted its non-standard approach to business and management. I also inquired into their perception of how business schools in the UK and this particular one fit into the university, and what they thought a university’s aims should be in today’s world.

Access was largely negotiated by FUSO’s Head of School on my behalf, who sent out an email to all five participants at once. The first response, sent to all recipients of the original email, was positive, which may have resulted in some sort of peer pressure for the others to also participate. Having said that, these interviews were much more difficult to conduct than the previous ones. Talking to people with more organizational power, who often had less lenient feelings towards FUSO, also meant that they saw me as someone representing the School and I felt the need to both maintain their trust in the interview situation and be careful about what I reveal from my preliminary findings or discussions with

others (see Harvey, 2010). This carefulness might have been part of the reason why I found myself to withdraw as interviewer, and allow them to dominate the discussion or carry on talking about a particular topic for most of the time.

For instance, one of them checked the clock above my head every three minutes, contributing to my lack of confidence, to establishing our relationship as one between the busy superior and the eager-to-know junior researcher, and to the feeling that the interview opportunity was rather a courtesy to the Head of School than an expression of genuine interest in the topic or scholarly camaraderie. This is however a subject position that renders an interview situation similar to how senior managers (have to) talk to colleagues and clients. Thus, it is rather comfortable for most of them, which might result in trust but more often in the researcher losing control of the interview situation and potentially getting inadequate answers. Specifically, conducting interviews with principals and vice-chancellors, Prichard (2000: 207–208) also observed that for them “the interview seemed to be a ‘slot’ in the diary where a reasonably well-rehearsed account of the institution, the work and self would be offered. [...] I was positioned as an outsider to whom the strategic agenda of the college or university would be explained”.

I recorded all formal interviews, after offering participants the option both not to record and to withdraw their consent at any point. I also reassured respondents that I would only quote them verbatim using pseudonyms; out of all interviewees, one wished to see and approve of any quotations used and another one declined to be quoted directly. These interviews, except for one staff member and one student due to arrangements about time and place, took place on the universities’ campuses, mostly in the respondents’ offices during their normal working days. The presence of the recorder did not seem to fundamentally influence the interviews for either of two reasons: the participatory aspect of my research had either created a relationship where trust was present by the time of the interview or, without such pre-mediation in a smaller number of cases, it was the professional nature of the relationship that dominated the tone of the conversations. In the latter cases, due to aspects of institutional power outside of the interview setting, seniority, or respondents’ experience of doing research and my relative lack thereof, it was often me who felt uncomfortable and felt that a certain professional mask of impression management was hard or impossible to move beyond. Finally, students in particular agreed to the interview and were comfortable with it being recorded; it was rather the parallel note taking that, I could see, made some of them feel as if I was judging their performance whenever I wrote

something down – hence in later stages this practice was either kept to a minimum or dropped altogether.

Data analysis

The main research question of this study has guided the methods used and it addresses a gap in the CMES literature. The question also invokes a set of theories in social science. The aim of this methodology section then is to create a link between what goes on “in the field”, the empirical, the practical – and our present understanding of the uses of CMS in education, which could be informed theoretically by the insights arrived at, in this thesis and beyond it, through this study. There is a continuous movement here between theory and empirics whereby they reinforce, challenge, and complement each other in a retroductive fashion (Glynos and Howarth, 2007) – as “a set of relays” (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977: 206), as I explain below.

Retroduction is an approach to research, and analysing data, that neither aims to bracket out previous understandings in the construction of research questions and finding answers like a purely inductive approach – for instance, grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) – would aim to do. Nor does it want to test hypotheses arrived at in a deductive manner on the basis of preconceived categories, in contrast to many forms of quantitative social research. Rather, retroduction considers such theoretical explanations acceptable which respond to the research problem or question at stake. Such explanations will be arrived at through a continuous process of discovery – a back and forth movement between earlier concepts, empirical data, and plausible assumptions (van Maanen, Sorensen and Mitchell, 2007) – rather than the validation of either previous or emergent conceptualizations. The difficulty being “that respecting both the primacy of theory and the primacy of evidence is no easy task” and it requires careful balancing (van Maanen et al., 2007: 1145).

The interview snippets and descriptions of observations I present throughout the thesis are thus pre-mediated by my theoretical framework, described in Chapter 2. These empirical examples then lead me to invoking theory again to help analyse the “data”, which in turn pins theory down to the partial and situated. There is a “double articulation” (Hall, 1985: 95, see also Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 196) taking place in any research endeavour. This consists of the researcher’s active articulation of their observations about articulated elements of the social (the empirical) with existing concepts (the theoretical). This practice of analysis results in new (theoretical) descriptions of the social (the first move of double

articulation), which in turn encourages and constrains certain ways of looking at the world (the second move). As a result, researchers can “generate three sets of articulatory relations: among empirical elements, among theoretical elements, and between empirical and theoretical elements [...] in an effort to provide a singular critical explanation of a problematized phenomenon” (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 180).

Articulation, understood as a temporary and partial fixation in the play of signifiers (Grossberg, 1986), is a befitting theoretical starting point to answer my question. But through analysing my data, in search of an explanation for the question of what holds in place the non-necessary and inherently transient phenomenon of a critically-oriented school of business and management, I also articulated together, compared and contrasted, organized meanings. This process of organizing knowledge necessarily “requires the death or at least the mutilation of that which is analysed” (Burrell, 1997: 19) as it fixes processes, flows, objects, people in a particular state after following all of them through fieldwork. The violence of analysis undermines any fundamental claim to validity as this thesis can only be an account of something past, something dead, a social world which will always necessarily overflow the analysis. What remains then, which I detail in what follows, are the steps taken to produce the articulated explanation this thesis is – and the hope that it will be reanimated through new articulations by my readers.

First, I conducted a thematic analysis of my interviews and fieldwork notes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The former were not fully transcribed because I found that listening to recordings allowed me to relate to tonality and emotions much better. Later I transcribed relevant parts for a fuller analysis. In the notes and interviews, I looked for recurrent themes, in relation to my research questions and guided by my prior engagement with theory, which signalled topics that were of importance to my participants. Unlike in most types of content analysis that operate with quantified frequency measures of words or phrases as units of analysis (Wilkinson, 2000), I identified key themes based on larger items of data by their conceptual centrality (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Yet, the choice regarding which one of these themes to follow up on, both in terms of further analysis but also more attention in later observations/analysis, often felt arbitrary. In these moments, I turned to theory again in a retroductive fashion thus oscillating between “inductive” and “theoretical” thematic analysis, though admittedly starting with the latter through my research interest in the topic area (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 83-84).

For instance, at a point Slack’s (1996: 126) following suggestion helped to re-focus my analysis: “Interrogating any articulated structure or practice requires an examination of

the ways in which the ‘relatively autonomous’ social, institutional, technical, economic and political forces are organized into unities that are effective and are relatively empowering or disempowering”. This particular quote then encouraged me to focus my attention on parts of the data where respondents discussed what they can or cannot do, or how they feel certain contexts constrain their actions and influence their identities. Discussion of the context of business management higher education in the UK in Chapter 4 is largely based on such an analysis.

My analysis provides what Braun and Clarke (2006: 83) call “a rich description of the entire data set”, rather than a detailed account of a particular theme as this approach had already been coded into the research design from the outset. I may have perceived certain themes as “bigger” than another researcher would have, partly because they fit my frame (do Mar Pereira, 2012). The will to say something *about* and *to* this academic community has certainly influenced which themes I found more and less important. It also means that some themes had to be left aside or could not be developed in this thesis as comprehensively as I would have liked (e.g. the one on gender in Chapter 5).

Second, as I argued in Chapter 2, with cultural studies, there is no other scholarship than political scholarship. Grossberg (2010: 21) is imperative in this regard, when he writes, “If a context can be understood as the relationships that have been made by the operation of power, in the interests of certain positions of power, the struggle to change the context involves the struggle to map out those relations and, when possible, to disarticulate and rearticulate them”. This typification leads Grossberg to present two possible politically motivated routes critical researchers can take. The first, what he calls “a kind of deconstructive strategy” (Grossberg, 2013: 40), would aim at showing that there is always more to reality than what actually exists at any time and space. Put simply, that alternatives are possible and that the articulation we happen to live in is always overdetermined, contingent. The second option aims to uncover how the world, its apparent naturalness and inevitable functionality, is produced. “This involves the work of contextual analysis [...] and the moment in which an ontology of contexts demands to be complemented, on the one hand, by theories of both locations and places, and, on the other, by the actual empirical work of describing what is going on (as a production of power)” (Grossberg, 2013: 40).

Taking up both of these options, my thesis provides a detailed empirical study of how power structures a particular segment of the world. But more specifically, I engage in the first move at several points in the analysis of the articulation in question. Hall (in Grossberg, 1986) also claims that the first analytical moment of investigating articulations

has to be a deconstructive move that unfreezes the play of signifiers temporarily halted by ideology. A deconstructive approach also fits with the “active interview” approach described earlier in which “[r]espondents’ comments are not viewed as reality reports delivered from a fixed repository. Instead, they are considered for the ways that they construct aspects of experiential reality in collaboration with the interviewed” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 156). Deconstruction is suggested by Holstein and Gubrium (2004) as the best way to attend to both the content of an interview and the process through which that content is created.

Deconstructive critique (Derrida, 1997) is based on a close reading of (social) texts and it aims to expose the organizing principle on which the fixity of the meaning of a text or a concept rests. It “challenges particular occlusions or closures *from within* by describing, unravelling and reworking their concrete specificity” (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 192). It does so by attending to silences, points of undecidability, hesitations in a text. Informed by queer theory (Butler, 1990, 1993), which has built extensively on deconstruction, I was also very interested in how (identity) categories, resulting in social exclusions and domination, were enacted and expressed by my respondents. My analysis of the antagonistic relationship between Flatshire University and FUSO in Chapter 4, which also includes close textual reading, as well as much of the discussion of the “we” in the academic field of CMS in Chapter 6, are examples of deconstructive readings.

Finally, I treated interviews and observed actions as discursive practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). This approach is coherent with articulation theory, active interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004), and “latent level” thematic analysis, which examines underlying ideologies (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Understood as identity producing practices, interviews scripts offer a way to investigate how subjects are positioned within various discourses and how they draw on these in their accounts (Prichard, 2000). I identified certain subject positions by looking at antagonisms in these articulations of critically-oriented schools of business and management. These are moments where it becomes visible that the homogenizing effects of articulation, what Purvis and Hunt (1993) propose to call ideologies, are always already in deconstruction. Following such an approach, in Chapter 5, I discuss four distinct subject positions that staff members have drawn on to construct their identities. I follow a similar approach with regard to students in Chapter 7.

These forms of analysis allowed me to provide a retroductive explanation of how critically-oriented schools of business and management are articulated. Case studies provide enough detail to be generalized from (Flyvbjerg, 2006): they are based on thick description instead of deductive hypotheses, which mitigates against the risk involved in (not)

generalizing (well) but they also allow for generalization beyond the particularities of each single case, for linking together various (empirical) contexts and (theoretical) explanations. Importantly, generalization is an articulatory practice itself and writing up this study I had some freedom to decide what theories and observations I articulate together. This, to reiterate a point made earlier, is not the one true depiction of either this particular case or similar cases in general. Casey (1995) uses metaphorically the legal concept of being a “credible witness” to events unfolding in the (social) world (of our respondents), and reporting those as we saw they happened. This results in writing an “ethnographic fiction” (Clifford, 1986), which uses the “empirical data” but not to the effect of a single *valid* representation of respondents’ social worlds. Ethnographic fiction rather builds on the momentum of creating these social worlds through the observed activities and interviews, to tell a theorized story. What matters is that this story can then be engaged with, it can provoke reactions from both the participants in the study and in discussing other similar cases (cf. Clifford, 1986).

During the writing of my own ethnographic fiction, I couldn’t always infer at first what I was going to say, and writing often translated into a process of discovery, into doing the analysis on the go, keeping Grossberg’s (2010) question in mind: what did you learn that you hadn’t known before your inquiry? What I can offer as the researcher analysing “data”, is a privileged story *in relation to my research questions* that connects my respondents’ individual experiences and narratives to emphasize a collective moment in our social world linking it to other respondents’ as well as other academics’ stories. I will do so in Chapters 4 to 7 before arriving at some tentative conclusions. Before doing that, I want to reflect on some of the ethical implications of this research – precisely because of our shared involvement in the process. With this I move from a discussion of methodological choices to their embodied affective effects, as revealed by the change in authorial tone.

3.2. Reflections on the process and the researcher’s role

On ethics and the impossibility of reflexivity

In a story “inspired by partial happenings, fragmented memories, echoes of conversations, whispers in corridors, fleeting glimpses of myriad reflections seen through broken glass, and multiple layers of fiction and narrative imaginings”, Sparkes (2007: 522) describes a UK academic who feels “that the university life [he] chose was not what [he] expected or

bargained for” (Sparkes, 2007: 521). The imaginary protagonist, Director of Research at the “University of Wannabe Academics”, is on the verge of nervous breakdown because he has to defend certain faculty members against the management of the university; his friend is being dismissed for not scoring high enough in the audit system; and he doesn’t have time for his favourite PhD student.

The story resonates with the experiences of various academics quoted at the end of the article, many of whom dropped a few tears while reading it, as it does too with me writing these lines in the middle of the night struggling with half-closed eyelids. The protagonist’s mantra, “I am not my CV. I am so much more than my CV”, eats itself into his mind, to the point of harassing strangers with it on the street. But the recognition does not offer consolation when he realizes after a meeting in the vice-chancellor’s office that “He had played the game on *their* terms, not his [own]” (Sparkes, 2007: 528). An opportunity to quit does not manifest; and he even congratulates an “othered” colleague who “believe[s] that you *are* your CV” (Sparkes, 2007: 532) for securing a grant and having two new publications. The protagonist comes to think of this act of congratulation as something “he *had* to say [...] but he didn’t have to *mean* it” (Sparkes, 2007: 531).

In my opinion such pretense runs through several aspects of being a management academic, moreover a critical one. I feel I have to conspicuously perform that I “deal with” ethics in the manner expected by the university. But responsibility for me is a way of reading, not a way of writing. (Or as Barthes [1977] would put it, the author is dead.) Responsibility as writing is a pre-emptive move of the audit culture to tame radicalism. Holding someone responsible for what they write re-institutes author/ity and mistakenly substitutes the then incarnated author for the text in an attempt to discipline them. The writer cannot assume full knowledge and understanding of their own text and the position from which they write as reflexivity understood that way would still fall prey of the “god-trick” (Haraway, 1988) of all-seeing vision (Rhodes, 2009). The text escapes the author and their never fully knowable position; hence, they cannot be held fully responsible for writing. There, nevertheless, is a certain responsibility constituted, but always only as the local constellation of power relations establish who gets to subject whom to the (institutional) force of being wrong. When this happens, the author may be identified as not responsible enough – much in the way researchers are required to have their responsibility fulfilled by gaining the approval of a relevant ethics committee *before* actually interacting with anyone as part of the research (see Bell and Wray-Bliss, 2009; Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008). And while responsibility is certainly

part of the research design and even the research questions, a particular research design will hardly guarantee ethical research on the whole.

I have followed the rules set out by the University of Leicester, largely because of the power differential involving funding and the conferring of a degree that could set me off course should I neglect to do so.⁶ However, had an ethical conundrum arose while I was doing my research – or should it still, at this point, close to submission – I might have had to reconsider where I stood.⁷ My responsibility lies in attempting to disclose, as I did in the previous sections, those values that impacted on how I constructed my research account, the decisions I took to construct a particular knowledge-narrative. This meant creating my own rules around negotiating ethics in the field, understood as “an ongoing, active, personal, and relational responsibility” (Bell and Wray-Bliss, 2009: 89), as an interpretation of the institutional regulations.

As previously discussed, research (accounts) are also articulations, which “requires truth not to be judged on the basis of representationalism or correspondence, but on the basis that it might ‘encourage human compassion’ [...] and provide insight into the relations between ourselves and others” (Rhodes, 2009: 666). As Rhodes (2009) argues, building on Derridean thought, by not claiming final authority over the knowledge created, there remains a certain openness and undecidability in the research. It is precisely this undecidability that warrants responsibility for the decisions nevertheless taken in its face – a responsibility that I tried to face, and describe in this chapter, necessarily failing to full-fill my obligation. I may sometimes have been hailed by common sense expectations in the academic field of management studies that otherwise contradict with my ethical stance.⁸ For instance, lacking conscious reflection, I aimed to interview a similar number of female participants (8 of 21, i.e. 38.1%) to that at FUSO overall (in September 2016, 39 of 107 full-time academics, or 36.4%). But this representativeness has likely led me to inadvertently reproduce gender inequality in academia through, as you will see, the inclusion of generally more and longer male voices into my research.

⁶ As I wrote here before gaining institutional approval for doing this research in 2013, “as much as I can tell before starting the fieldwork, in my case, this is not going to compromise my ethical commitments outlined below”. Now, three years later, I can say it has not.

⁷ Again, three years on, I can say that I would have valued certain respondents above others based on personal politics and shared values.

⁸ We arrived at this realization together with one of my supervisors rather too late, during the discussion of a full draft of my thesis. Had it happened earlier, I probably would have acted upon it in a more fundamental way.

Confidentiality and ignorance

Following Rappert, it can be argued that autoethnographic writing to date is mostly concerned with “bringing into view what would otherwise be out of sight” (2010: 573) – and making things invisible that would otherwise be saliently in-sight. Ignorance, being out of sight, is not antithetical to knowledge as Sedgwick (1990) shows, building on Foucault. Both of them are produced by power relations, and in turn can act as temporary nodes of power. Sedgwick describes how in Racine’s play on the biblical story of Esther, the King’s “powerful ignorance” (Sedgwick, 1990: 77) of Queen Esther’s Jewishness enables him to murder Jews without proving immoral, while it closets her and forces her to pass as non-Jew. When Esther comes out to prevent a mass extinction of Jews, the power relations turn around. The King becomes debilitated, and coming out “bring[s] about the revelation of a powerful unknowing *as* unknowing” (Sedgwick, 1990: 77). Once out, however, the closet ceases to exist, it loses its revelatory power once and for all. Esther’s secreted knowledge about herself becomes public and it begins to often entirely define her by implicating her in another set of power relations.

(Auto)ethnographic writing, and the requirement for confidentiality in qualitative research more generally, creates similar closets in my view. Through consciously ignoring certain aspects of the research (particularly the ones pertaining to the identity of each individual), the researcher creates a power differential. Decisions about what to bring to the light keeps non-participants in a state of powerful ignorance, while it closets participants of the research who can choose to or are forced to pass as if they had not participated. Baez (2002) shows how the discourse of confidentiality is rooted in

the liberal-humanist ideas of the sanctity and sovereignty of the individual. Those who see confidentiality as protecting people from harm and invasions of privacy emphasize the sanctity of the individual, while those who critique confidentiality as limiting autonomy and choice emphasize the sovereignty of the individual. Such liberal-humanist discourses would deem agency as necessarily involving “free will”, or the conscious and rational acts of individuals, and such will is constrained by the individual’s fear of harm, invasion of privacy, or even the inability to choose. (Baez, 2002: 44)

But confidentiality is something research participants might not want (Medford, 2006) or researchers do not want to commit to, for example in the name of the greater social good (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008: 1527). Baez (2002) goes as far as to claim that confidentiality actually thwarts social transformation by reiterating those currently existing social structures that, to borrow Sedgwick’s term, closet individuals in the first place. Either

“protecting” these participants, or letting them exercise their “free will” to be unidentifiable, overlooks the idea that agency itself is produced by the same social configuration. Hence, coming out may disturb the current power relations, albeit temporarily. Sedgwick is well aware and goes on to analyse how such a presentation of the coming out story borders on the sentimental, and Baez fulfils the wishes of his interviewees to be kept unidentifiable – not causing harm is a “tenuous line [to] traverse between the needs of the researcher and the needs of the researched” (Baez, 2002: 54). But it is the recognition that this line is arbitrarily drawn that is important for me in terms of ethical commitments. The power is largely in the researcher’s hands to consensually expose, closet, or indeed out someone. The guarantee of confidentiality involves a decision to be taken, consequently it is an issue of responsibility.

Similarly, the assumption that anonymity is the guarantee of the honesty of participants is flawed. It is based on the same belief in a unified self that is true to itself, as described above. As soon as we move away from this conception to appreciate fragmented identities, we have to realize that people in general, and research participants in particular, act in varied social contexts where they have different selves. When participating in an anonymized research what participants say may be different to what they say with their names attached. But both are different to what they share with their hairdressers, children, diaries, etc. Different but not more or less true. In Baez’s words, “trust is more likely to ensure honest discussion than any kind of promise of confidentiality” (2002: 54). It is perhaps time for *confidentiality* to be re-conceptualised around the notion of *confidence* in one’s capability to contribute to changing oppressive social relations, and building mutual trust (having *cum fide* as their common Latin root) between researchers and participants. Such a reconceptualization would imply an understanding of the relationship as one based on trust and mutuality rather than exploitation, biased data, and withholding information.

In terms of my research, confidentiality has been a difficult problem given the case study design. The *Research Ethics Code of Practice* of the University of Leicester provides rather obscure guidelines as to what is expected from researchers. I concur with researchers’ obligation to “protect research participants wherever possible from significant harm consequent upon the research” (University of Leicester, 2011), although both significance and causality are hard to establish in any particular case. Common ways of guaranteeing confidentiality include altering participants’ names and descriptions, offering interpretations only, and drawing together voices. I found it hardly possible to alter identities by changing names or details for several participants who (and whose manner of speech) are either well-known to their colleagues, or whose positions may be an important factor of the research

(Heads of Department, programme leaders, university managers, etc.). Not surprisingly, for my research to get the ethical clearance, I had to promise that I would also alter participants' positions and titles. I contemplated the idea of not including direct quotations. Doing so would have resulted in losing the evocative aspect of ethnographic writing and made it harder to establish the "validity" of my interpretations. Alternatively, drawing voices together to produce a "dialogical narrative" (Bell and King, 2010: 433), another option, could have resulted in the concealment of differences and fractures between various positions by presenting a polished account, while insiders could still be able to recognize the individual speakers quoted.

As Levinson (2010) argues, it is often concealed in research accounts how the originally planned theoretical and ethical position of the researcher (regarding access, informed consent versus openness and flexibility, critical distance, and prioritization of voices) changes through the fieldwork. He concludes that Bakhtinian polyphony, in which the author's becomes only one of the many voices in the narrative, is really hard to achieve in practice since "through the sequencing of voices (s)he is a puppeteer, a conductor" (Levinson, 2010: 205). Opening up my research narrative to include these voices in the form of active collaboration could have offered a possibility for "working the hyphen" between self and other (Fine, 1994), for creating a shared space. This practice would go beyond member checking of data (Cresswell and Miller, 2000: 127), which assumes that insider respondents' accounts are more accurate depictions of an assumed single reality than those of the researcher.

A shared space can provide an opportunity for discussion of interpretations and arguments, a form of participatory co-creation of research output (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008) that we might as well call a mutually developed frame. Pelias (2005: 421) notes how what he calls "performative writing" stimulates empathic identification by readers to concretize the research on their own terms, and thus "often ask[s] readers to respond, not just at the level of ideas but as one person who has become connected to another". Wray-Bliss (2004) suggests a similar approach based on feminist and postcolonial theory and Robinson and Kerr (2015) do so from a hermeneutic position. Due to time limitations and the requirement of a thesis being sole authored this remains a possibility to be realized only after my viva. To put it differently, there is no universal stance on the question of confidentiality and, I believe, it is in accord with the research participants that decision about it should be made. Moreover, this decision is not made only once but it has to be a recurrent part of the research, in line with what Ellis (2007) calls "process consent".

An insider-outsider on and off duty

The problem of insiders' access to knowledge about their own social world has been long discussed (see, for instance, Merton, 1972). On the one hand, being an insider is thought to yield richer data by capitalizing on the shared belonging of the research participants and the researcher. On the other hand, it may become more difficult to maintain a critical distance from the research events and contexts – the researcher may have a tendency to overemphasize insignificant details and overlook important but familiar things (Karra and Phillips, 2007). I think three factors mitigated this problem, which ultimately depended on good judgement and finding an appropriate balance, in my case. First, at the beginning of my fieldwork I had not been part of FUSO for such a long period to know and understand its every aspect. Second, a goal the inclusion of the minor sites in my research design helped to achieve was the creation of such a balance. And, third, through discussing my research at various stages with both my supervisors and other doctoral students at times I realized that they found other things surprising or important than I did, enabling me to follow up on these leads.

Another difficult border to judge throughout this research was being on and off duty. There was a point, namely 31 December 2014, that I marked out as the moment in which I would stop to be a researcher – partly to focus my efforts on more intense data analysis and writing. But I could not “walk away” from the field as would be the case in traditional ethnography (even if that means a complex and varied process, see Rehner Iversen, 2009), due to my job-related duties and social connections. Being in and out of the field thus became a rather blurred boundary. While I was “in” the field, I don't really think I was ever off duty, or even if I was, I could instantly switch being a researcher back on (whether strolling on campus, being in a pub, or laughing at a conference). Starting from 2015, I could not help to be interested in events related to my research and it took a conscious effort not to include these in my analysis (but see Section 8.3 for a reflection on what has happened since the arbitrary cutoff date). In addition, my respondents, who were also my colleagues before and after the above cutoff date, could not always be aware when I was a researcher while in the field and when I was not one from 2015. Do Mar Pereira (2012) raises the ethics of such, often unwilling, involvement on the part of (non-)participants, when she asks whether participants also have a right to a backstage.

A brief exchange brought this question into sharp light for me. Before an event for the whole School, I was having sandwiches with other early birds – a senior professor who

organized the event, his long-time colleague-friend, the deputy head of FUSO, a young lecturer, and another PhD student. The group ended up discussing the issue of concern and worry around the appointment of a new Head of School. At that point, I had not heard anything about the latest developments for several weeks. When the lecturer said something witty and incisive, I jokingly said, “This is such a great quote for my PhD”. Without much hesitation, she came back at me saying, “I haven’t given you my permission to quote me on this”. She might not have felt the joking tone and I did nevertheless acquire some up-to-date gossip about the topic but this came at the expense of pushing the role of being a researcher too far. Maybe I could have “walked away” more publicly, for instance, by sending another email to mark the end of my research – even if not necessarily a change in my own mentality. At the time, I found this lecturer’s reprise surprising but also eye-opening in that not everyone may feel comfortable with my using their insights for my own purposes. Or, moreover, that what I write may be personally detrimental to them and their sense of trust and security in the organization they had worked at before my arrival as a researcher and will continue to do so after my departure. In retrospect, I think it was this moment when I really understood the meaning of process consent, as something that is beyond formal ethical reviews and signatures on consent forms.

Avoidance of harm

Which brings me to the issue of the avoidance of harm. I kept asking myself at different points: what does my research do to its participants? One constituent is the broad CMS community, including the local groups at the three research sites as well as the institutions researched. I am aware of the possibility, but not about any such facts, that unintentionally I might have played particular people against each other. I tried to avoid this by sounding off some of my concerns on two sympathetic and empathic colleagues, which discussions rarely ever included anything to do with my data and observations, and were rather on potential consequences and, frankly, a sort of “therapy” for me. My aim has been throughout to consider and share this case together with its internal contradictions, struggles about the meaning of criticality, resistance by students and staff, and so on. I didn’t intend to collect and codify good and bad practices, as I highlighted in Chapter 1, that would potentially reflect on the individuals/institutions where these are enacted. Participants did not express reservations about contributing to my thesis during the research. This may partly be due to the longstanding practice of self-reflection in CMS (Bridgman and Stephens, 2008; Clarke,

2009; Harney and Dunne, 2013; Hartmann, 2014; Hopwood, 2009; King and Learmonth, 2014; Parker, 2002; Tati, 2012). Of course, it can all change once my thesis enters the public realm but I hope to have mitigated against potential risks.

I believe the students who shared their thoughts with me benefitted from the experience. The research gave them an opportunity to reflect on their undergraduate studies and the role FUSO played in their lives. Their identities have been masked and there was no way for this research to influence their grades in any way. By drawing their attention to FUSO's alleged critical stance, I expressed an idea of more rewarded behaviours, answers and types of writing but my feeling was that the students I interviewed were already aware of this, possibly unlike the majority who did not respond to my call. My double status as doctoral student and staff member was regarded by some students as a channel through which they can anonymously express concerns about their education – and as such it helped me build trust. I did relay some of their criticism to other staff members but my intention, stated openly at these interviews, was not about giving voice. I have certainly not been in a position to single-handedly change things or make any of their requests accepted but my theorized account of what they said is described in Chapter 7, and that may bring on some effects.

Finally, harm might concern me as the researcher. The sensitivity of the topic, especially as it is tied up with particular configurations of power and (formal) authority, can have both positive and negative consequences on my future “employability”. As Parker's (2004) “werewolf story” shows, CMS scholars are often wary of acting in authoritarian ways even if they are congratulated for their all-too-successful “becoming manager”. Power, in my case to say or write nice or insinuating things about research participants, has been frightening at times as I hope the ethical considerations detailed above exhibit. My aim, to repeat, has not been to expose people or establish good and bad practices – but to work the hyphen. This has involved an attempt “to see how [the] ‘relations between’ get us ‘better’ data, limit what we feel free to say, expand our minds and constrict our mouths, engage us in intimacy and seduce us into complicity, make us quick to interpret and hesitant to write” (Fine, 1994: 72). Learmonth and Humphreys (2011) clearly demonstrate how good/bad, successful/unsuccessful are also discursively formed categories, and how narratives we produce can always be questioned, and indeed should be critiqued, from external vantage points. Reading the co-created stories and re-reading them differently (Rhodes, 2000) is where responsibility lies.

Having introduced my theoretical framework and methodology, the next chapter offers the first instance of my privileged story as a researcher, and is mostly focused on the relationship between Flatshire University and FUSO in the context of higher education in the UK. Chapter 5 then will take us into the school of organizing to magnify some of the differences that may seem masked over by a sense of unity in the next chapter. Chapter 6 will open up the institution in an effort to focus on the paths that connect it to a wider academic field and other scholars. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss a particular area of academic practice, learning and teaching, and contrast the insights of the previous chapters with the perceptions of a particular group, students. In the concluding Chapter 8, I bring together these lines of inquiry in an attempt to turn deconstruction into politically motivated rearticulation.

CHAPTER 4

US AND THEM:

A CO-CONSTRUCTED HISTORY

The next four chapters can be understood as four contexts in which the articulation of critically-oriented schools of business and management is sustained – processes related to institutional histories, people, knowledge, and teaching. As discussed in Chapter 2, I conceive of the articulation of each school in my study as a non-necessary “connection [...] which has to be positively sustained by specific processes” (Hall, 1985: 113, fn.2). The schools in my study in this sense are not inherently self-contained entities but they appear in the constellation of a variety of social and historical forces, discourses, and social practices. In this chapter, I engage with broader and narrower historical changes in the idea and operation of universities, business schools, and FUSO in particular. Building on the understanding of various contexts established here, I go on to discuss the range of discursive subject positions my respondents draw on and “the mental frameworks [these] social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (Hall, 1983: 59) in Chapter 5. As a third move that contributes to the articulation of the School, I look at changes in the academic field of CMS and the institutionalization of critique in business and management schools in Chapter 6. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the context of teaching and learning as the fourth very important set of processes through which FUSO is articulated.

This chapter is largely based on a parallel reading of the history of the university and the business school. Trajectories of these institutions sometimes cross and reinforce each other, while at others they depart ways. Discussing the *alleged* shift from the “liberal-national” to today’s “virtual-global” university, Robins and Webster (2002) mention two typical

arguments. The first, less prevalent argument contrasts the virtuous past of liberal education with a problematic present. The second, more influential one, juxtaposes the snobbish past of the “ivory tower” with the much welcomed turn towards profitability and virtual solutions. Against such an epochal division, Robins and Webster favour to “think of change in terms of *the accumulation or accretion of new layers of complexity*” (2002: 6, my emphasis).

First, they argue that although the university is often thought to be an elitist institution, efforts have been made to make access to it wider and new societal currents have also appeared on the curricula. Second, the university has been built on a “collegial model” (Robins and Webster, 2002: 7), which on the one hand was a historically situated model of organization that stems from the Kantian founding ethos of autonomy; on the other, it has been accompanied by an effort to manage the complexity brought by the enlarging university. Third, the university has always been a place where local and cosmopolitan concerns cross each other. However, this issue has become more salient due to two developments. The institution where a degree is awarded has become more important. And universities, especially business schools, have increased their global outreach. Fourth, the liberal model of university is a discourse that excludes all applied or instrumental education universities have been engaging in – training workforce for various professions: engineers, physicists, lawyers, etc. Aiming to fulfil only one of these goals means losing complexity from sight.

Taking their approach as a cue, in this chapter my aim is to map and match some of these wider historical forces and local discourses that create both constraining and enabling conditions of existence of the three schools in my study. Grey and Willmott (2005) also argue that it is the institutional location of CMS in the business school that allows it to become critical but which at once limits what this critique may achieve. While the rest of the thesis will precisely elaborate on how this process happens, in this chapter I investigate the conditions of possibility Grey and Willmott (2005) briefly highlight.

I show how historical changes do not simply alter the relationship between the university and the business school but they live on as if they were layers transforming and overwriting previous epochs without ever fully discarding them. Such intersecting partial histories of the more-than-local are fused together in the process of articulation (Clifford, 2013). As Clifford (2013) explains and I am going to show in this chapter, this means a merging of both historical time and what are traditionally understood as levels of explanation from the local to the global. Even more importantly for my argument, these layers are reflected in the discourses, categorizations, language, symbols that my respondents build on. In this sense, this chapter is as much about my three sites as it is more generally about the

university and the business school in the current context of higher education. That is, the chapter traces what Hall calls “lines of tendential force” (Grossberg, 1986), which create a propensity for a certain articulation to remain in place. The second part of my argument, which runs through the whole thesis in different forms as a development of articulation theory, posits that the actors involved including members of the three schools, and managers and students of Flatshire University performatively create this context, or rather multiple contexts.

To frame my reading of the parallel history, I take Delanty’s (2002) account of revolutionary changes in the university as a starting point and juxtapose this with the development of the university-based business school. Starting with the era of joint development, I ask if critically-oriented business and management schools at the present are similar to how management education started in the late 19th century. Next, an era of diverging trajectories raises the question of what counts as impact – and at a more fundamental level, whether the management school’s main ethical constituent is society in general or businesses in particular. Then from the end of the 20th century we see a rise in management scholarship in universities, which on the surface unites these two institutions again. Using the stories of three research quality measurements at FUSO, I present how the question of what a business school is for is closely related to power struggles in defining what counts (and does not count) as quality and success in keeping up with the growth and adaptation of other business schools. Finally, I discuss the “global” context, treated again as a performatively articulated context, through the practices FUSO members use to resolve the contradiction of being different and appearing similar.

4.1. Us and them

I am sitting in a lecture theatre with around a hundred third-year undergraduate management students. At a certain point the lecturer starts talking about Michel Foucault – certainly not an uncommon thing in classes at FUSO. We can assume, he explains, that Foucault was partly preoccupied with thinking about what gets marked as deviance and how this relates to questions of truth and identity because for numerous reasons he couldn’t fit into the society of the time. So maybe he was preoccupied with *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990), in particular, because he belonged to an unorthodox sexual minority. Foucault practiced fistfucking. Unusual silence descends on the lecture theatre following this announcement combined with dashes of kindergarten-like giggling by the more liberal minded. At another

occasion, another class, I hear of a senior member of staff who reportedly shocked students by “F-bombing” them at a lecture.⁹

It is certainly not the case that everyone and at all times would be using graphical speech or be cursing at FUSO. Then again, it is fairly typical occurrence and is more widespread (at lectures, meetings, and cigarette breaks) than at any other business school that I have had the chance to visit. As Parker (2005: 46) notes, “fuck is a kind of organising principle, an insertion that marks the difference between this and that”. At Flatshire, “this” seems to be FUSO, and “that” Flatshire University central administration in a lot of discussions. “This” are the good guys and “that” are the bad ones. “This,” the sarcastic critics of business; “that,” the neophytes of the liberal church.

The self-reflexively deployed swear words serve a particular purpose. Billig (2013) writing about the disappearance of verbs and actors in the academic language of social scientists, gives a clue about a possible reason for the use and avoidance of such expressions. As he argues,

the older sorts of noun-only phrase, with their sharp short nouns, can be just right for *deflating pretentiousness and undermining authority*. Yet, serious academics consider it taboo to use these terms. We take ourselves far too seriously to demean ourselves by using unseemly, inferior language. Knob heads. (Billig, 2013: 156, emphasis added)

It constitutes part of critical practice when academics at FUSO step down from the pedestal of high culture, when they try to bring closer their topics and the lifeworld of students, when they destabilize the unquestioning belief in scientific truth. Such practices, of which language is an important part, performatively create (see Butler, 1990) the identity of a critical scholar. Expressions used don’t simply describe an independently existing social world, they rather (re)create that world. By reiterating particular concepts, FUSO members destabilize the seriousness of academia and assert their own identities as more easy-going people at the same time.

Hence, it can only happen “serendipitously”, reads an email from a senior manager in FUSO, that “Flatshire University, the College and, indeed, [FUSO’s] Policy and Strategy committee believe” the same thing. Mostly they don’t. For example, when a member at a meeting of the latter group proposes in a “fever dream” (Charlie) that it would put Flatshire University ahead of the curve if instead of buying “smart printers”, it gave everyone tablets,

⁹ “F-bomb refers to the strongest weapon in one’s verbal arsenal. In a time when words like ‘bitch’ and ‘ass’ have lost their shock value in pop culture, the word ‘fuck’ is still like dropping a bomb in polite conversation.” (The Urban Dictionary, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=F-Bomb>, accessed: 14 April 2014)

someone responds, “That’s cheaper and sensible. So... no” (Lily). Which is not surprising because, together with the latest undergraduate recruitment stats, it would be “just another example that any numbers that come out of the Centre are just rubbish” (Emily). These are not roles these staff members play to beguile students and each other but by the reiterated differentiation between FUSO and the University they become who they are.

At another meeting, members of the much bigger Learning and Teaching Committee – undergraduate, postgraduate, MBA and distance learning programme leaders, representatives of the subject groups, the Head of Learning and Teaching, programme administrators and quality assurance officers – are seated in a seminar room with the Chair of the meeting at the front of the class and everyone else at the desks arranged in rows. They are discussing how easiest to get through the so-called Programme Approval Process to accredit a new programme in Accounting and Finance. Committee members express strong opinions on the basis of past experience. The shared feeling is that the process is not easy because central university administrators involved are “crazy about typos” and it is “a war you cannot win” because, on the one hand, they don’t like standardized forms of assessment but, on the other, they compare the assessment in any individual module with the others on the same programme.¹⁰ Hence, FUSO may face “an attenuated process of programme approval” potentially made worse by “annoying people from genetics commenting on our stuff”. To be clear, enunciates the Chair almost *ex cathedra*, ultimately the Head of College “will tell us what we run and what we don’t. Which may be the more painless way of doing it” (Isaac).

There is a clear attempt at these meetings to divide the world into us and them. But the sides can never be clearly separated as they cannot exist without each other. Once discursively separated, these concepts reduce messiness and describe interconnections between discrete entities that react with one another. “It would be so tidy if fuck were found to be a revolutionary word,” continues Parker (2005: 48). But the scaffolding of fuck may as well conveniently disguise the problem of being implicated in maintaining the structure.

The problem is that [... i]t is just as easy to fuck the workers, fuck women and hate those fucking queers. [...] Fuck won’t be organised, because it already organises its own excess. The word escapes restricted economies, refuses to follow orders, and bites the fat professorial hand that types it (Parker, 2005: 48).

¹⁰ To reiterate a point made earlier, I am not interested here in the truth-value of these statements. What matters are the linguistic constructs, expressions used and discourses relied on as they lead to the creation of particular subject positions (see Chapter 5).

The antagonistic organization of us and them, is an articulated one. As I present later, some senior managers of Flatshire University expressed that they (vaguely) understand what FUSO is trying to do or even had a hand in its becoming critically-oriented. FUSO's leadership, on the other hand, considers it an added benefit to be affiliated with a university in contrast with other business schools that try to become as detached as possible. The various separations of an "us" from a "them" reflect the troubled history of business and management studies inside the university, as I'm going to show in what follows. But the separation cannot fully work and this is why it has to be repeatedly actively maintained. The mutual relationships between the university, its business school, and the corporate world have always been fraught with dissonances as I show in the next sections.

The university and its business school – a parallel history

Delanty (2002: 32) describes "four major revolutions" in line with socio-economic changes in the nature of modernity that have transformed universities. The first one was the era of the Humboldtian model from the late 18th to the late 19th century with the double purpose of "the rationalization of culture [and] the reproduction of cultural traditions" (Delanty, 2002: 34) at its heart. It is at this point that the university becomes connected with the idea of national cultural self-definition and the creation of similar national citizens through education. This "liberal model of the university" (Robins and Webster, 2002: 5), therefore, is a carrier of higher values, official national culture, and allegedly universal knowledge. Such knowledge is assumed to be detached from the direct influence of both the state and religious dogma based on the Kantian idea of the university's autonomy and its right, as well as moral duty, to critique in the name of reason (Kant, 1992).

Kant's work already foreshadows Delanty's (2002) second revolution, which originated in the USA. Kant locates in the university the "higher faculties," which directly serve the state by providing vocational education in law, theology, and medicine. Later this distinction became blurred and the critical autonomy was extended to all faculties. However, the rise of industrial modernity from the late 19th century brought with it the (re-)appearance of instrumental goals, of vocational training at university level. At this time, "[t]he function of the university is no longer merely cultural but social: it becomes a core institution in the worldwide revolution of modernization" (Delanty, 2002: 36). A modernization that rationalizes social functions, and similarly orders the university into smaller departmental units, thus making faculties lose their primacy. Business schools appear in the field

constituted by this coincidental occurrence of universities' assuming a social function, re-introducing vocational education, and creating distinct departments. Khurana (2007) elaborately shows how the business school itself is also connected to the legitimization struggles of management as a profession that serves society, has "higher aims" around the late 19th century. At this moment, the business school probably needs the university more than the other way around, since its location inside an established and important social institution can help its own institutionalization and contribute to its social acceptance.

This is not the case anymore. In 2012, David Willetts, the Minister of State for Universities and Science in the UK at the time, came out in support of business schools whose heads reportedly often expressed their wish to sign a unilateral declaration of independence from their respective universities. Not going that far, Willetts was considering "a new type of contract between a business school and the rest of the university in which perhaps the business school gets to keep more of the revenues generated by its students" (quoted in Matthews, 2012). Having gained legitimacy and power, business schools don't need the university so much.

In this context it sounds rather unusual when at an all-school meeting in FUSO, Daniel, a senior member of staff expresses a contrasting sentiment when he says, "our trick has to be exploiting and building on the fact that we're part of a university". A trick is needed because FUSO is not a typical business school. Partly, having a school that is interdisciplinary at its core (as business, management and organization studies should arguably be) benefits from and maybe even necessitates a closer connection with other departments and research centres of the University. It is also a question of appearance about how these other units of Flatshire University perceive FUSO – as the same or different to other business schools, as doing serious scholarship or questioning its seriousness from the outset. But FUSO, and this shows the persistence of the times of Delanty's second revolution, also depends on Flatshire University for legitimation. Given this dependence and Flatshire's longer history, there is a clear power differential between the University and the School. The former has the authority to appoint new deans and heads, whose ideas about the direction critical schools should take may be at odds with the currently existing one (see Section 8.3).

A diverging trajectory: what is impact?

After the period of connected development, the business school and the university diverge during the times of Delanty's third revolution. From the 1960s, the university undergoes

radically different changes that make it more ethically and politically committed. The failure of the promise of the modernist project with the Second World War (see Adorno and Horkheimer, 1986) as well as the unfulfilled expectations of capitalism after the War produced broad social and political changes that did not leave the university intact either. Access to university started to widen; accepted canons were challenged by feminists and “race” scholars to include some aspects of marginalized experiences in the curricula; and altogether “the university ceased to be a transmitter of a received cultural tradition but [became] a transformer” of society assuming besides “the functions of teaching, research, and training [...] the role of public critique” (Delanty, 2002: 39).

At the same time, the university-based business school was on another trajectory – as a result of an uncontrolled influence of managers, the 1970-80s would see the systematic extinguishing of the professional ethos of management by the demands of shareholder capitalism and through the increased presence of specialist managers (Khurana, 2007). As we approach the end of Delanty’s third major revolution of the university by the end of the 1980s, the higher aims of business schools are gone and the lack of adherence to an ethos of professionalism results in the production of “hired hands” without “a wider social mission” (Butler, 2008: 351). For Khurana, this is problematic in itself, but especially so in light of the recent global economic crisis (Butler, 2008).

By the 1950-60s, management unquestionably attains a professional status, and it is at the height of its power both in terms of directing major corporations and in the business school (Khurana, 2007). Not surprisingly, in the years to follow, business schools start to serve the technocratic needs of the profession, which requires “a more mechanized, capital-intensive process for training large numbers of managers” (Khurana, 2007: 233) as opposed to “a sense of duty-bound professionalism” (Butler, 2008: 349). The necessary capital is largely provided by philanthropic organizations (such as the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations) that gradually start to favour research-orientation and quantitative analysis. Management is on the road to omnipresence as the decontextualized authority on getting work organized and done. Management education funded by the charitable arms of big business ends up producing research and managers to serve the interests of these corporations. The idea of being responsible to society, that is management’s ethical ethos and professional standards, eventually considerably weaken under shareholders’ and financial investors’ rule.

This development can be characterized as an instance of the changing context of knowledge production. A change, though, that brings back an older form of defining what

counts as knowledge – and who defines this – that Bresnen and Burrell (2012) call “Mode 0 form.” From the mid-1990s onwards (see Gibbons, et al., 1994; Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001), academic knowledge production has been increasingly framed as satisfying the ends of either practical relevance, or scholarly rigour. Supposedly moving to a more open and accountable science, proponents of relevance argued that knowledge should be evaluated in terms of its applicability. Using their parlance, the classic university form of “Mode 1” characterized by a scientific community deciding upon what research is rigorous enough to be accepted and valued, should give way to the “Mode 2” production of relevant knowledge as described above.

However, Bresnen and Burrell (2012) argue that the era of Mode 0, the period of patronage for savants and virtuosos who serve the benefit of their sponsoring aristocrats, is on the return; or more precisely, that it has never been superseded. The Carnegie Foundation financed a new review of management education, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation shapes US educational policy to fit their own vision of the future (Picciano and Spring, 2013), classrooms and libraries are named after powerful donors – including the one at FUSO –, research alliances involving industry and academia in medicine are given prestigious press releases, and vice-chancellors express how “that’d be fantastic if we’d have proper partnerships with [Amazon and Google amongst others], of course”.¹¹ (And this process is even more escalated in the US, with graduating PhD students being given short fixed-term contracts to write grants for national foundations as their main occupation [McLaren et al., 2014].) As Bresnen and Burrell (2012) argue, in Mode 1 it was the state as a concentrated repository of elite class interests that acted as the patron of relevant research. In Mode 2, the state is slowly withdrawing with corporations and their associated foundations, often in the hands of a particular family, taking control of the research regime – a fact further underscored in the UK by having the university Council of local industrial and aristocratic elite as the institution’s highest level decision-making body.

An epitome of Mode 0/2 in the current academic climate is the issue of impactful research. Impact case studies have been introduced for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 as a variable for the first time, beside academic output and environment. The REF, or formerly Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), is a framework for evaluating knowledge produced at all English universities over a 5 to 7-year period. Much depends on the outcome: directly the amount of state funding a university (and a department) receives

¹¹ FUSO’s vice-chancellor lays out a new strategic plan for Flatshire University (January 2015). I attended this presentation out of general interest – but it put my researcher hat back on for a few days.

until the next round of evaluations, but even more importantly its outcomes indirectly provide the basis for calculating each department's ranking in league tables. The latter is (financially) important because it serves as students' first and, more often than not, only point of reference when it comes to deciding which university's which department they would like to study at (see more on this in Chapter 7). It may as well play some part in attracting top scholars – although personal relations also seem to matter there (see Chapter 6 for more detail).

The REF has of course changed decision makers' considerations at the University too and it contributes to the financialization of making appointments and doing research. As Joseph, a senior manager of Flatshire University, points out to me, the REF has pushed universities in the UK to appoint on the basis of past achievements and not on potential. He explains that this may not be the best investment the University could make without the REF. Appointments are based on a “staffing envelope” (Joseph) that includes considerations about the money spent on the *investment* in a position as well as the human *resource* it brings in to the University. To make decisions about staff appointments, having consulted the relevant Head of College, and treating the issue as a matter of investments and resources, Joseph would first look at how a department is performing financially to determine if an appointment is necessary at all. For instance, it may happen that a professor leaves from an area that is not in the research focus of the University but is fundamental to offering a rounded degree programme. In this case “at times with grit of teeth perhaps, then you gotta replace them” judging on “a range of different criteria – financial resources, the strategy for both teaching and research within the department”, at the college, and University levels (Joseph).

Having spent the year before the REF 2014 submission at FUSO, I witnessed how the list of academics employed was extended with several professors, many of whom have seldom visited FUSO ever since their appointment. A similar number of staff members were appointed at lower levels, mainly as lecturers, because the growth of FUSO and its need for teaching staff both allowed and required this, to complement the chairs. However, the weight was put on the latter as a way to harness some existing and potential future publications. I have also been told by the cognoscenti that I may be lucky in terms of the REF cycle, since the time I finish my PhD will still coincide with the end of the early years when institutions may still be more open to hiring candidates based on their potential rather than their existing publications. Regarding the closing end of the cycle members of “Sub-panel 19: Business and management studies” for REF 2014 were indeed

concerned that some [early career researchers] were *appointed rather late in the assessment period*, which may have had a disproportionate effect upon the profile of some institutions. Similarly the panel was concerned about the *inclusion of some visiting staff on part-time contracts*; particularly those with substantive appointments in other countries, who were appointed late in the assessment period, with contracts that concluded shortly after the end of the assessment period (REF, 2015: 54).¹²

Financial considerations span across all activities of the university. Research is normally expected to be world-class to result in the best possible REF ranking. But as George, a senior manager of the University explains, staff members' common complaint that "there's not enough money for research" can be *equally* well turned around to say "we're doing too much research for the money we have" (George). This situation tends to favour departments and research activities that are already in a good position to secure good REF results. So when the vice-chancellor is asked about where he would take the money from to create more focused research centres, he quickly diverts the question and starts talking about the financial health of the University.

The "impact agenda" has been reconfirmed by the Stern Review of the REF in August 2016 as an important and useful (though not faultless) element. In this environment, FUSO seems to have two options in following suit. It can either hire more staff who can have impactful research as it is currently understood, or present convincingly how it has been exercising impact already. In brief, they can either exercise or demonstrate impact. I explore the first one of these options below and the second one at the end of this chapter. For the other two sites I researched – MUSO and WUSO – this is less of a concern at school-level. Being smaller critically-oriented organizational units, their embeddedness in a bigger school means that the burden of producing impactful research does not necessarily fall onto them alone.

Impact is the variable along which FUSO scored approx. 15 percentage points below the national average. With the rumoured increase of its weight in future REFs, from the current 20% weight to 25% or more, the vice-chancellor was quick to appoint one of the pro-vice-chancellors to oversee a task force that would work on enhancing collaboration between FUSO and the business world. Because impact is largely about that particular nexus. It "is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia" (REF, 2011: 26). This is a very limited description of what may count as impact. As a hierarchized list it values

¹²This comment was not made about Flatshire University or FUSO in particular and I have no knowledge of such appointments clearly oriented at gaming the system. However, the evaluation panel's general remark highlights an alarming tendency.

the economic above all other spheres (Burrell, 2013). It is most often translated as meeting the needs of business by increasing students' employability, giving practice a bigger role, and nurturing relationships with companies to mask the corporate truths of unaccountability and masculine domination (Edmonds, 2013). Masculinity is coded into the concept of impact itself. It originates from von Bismarck's Prussian army and carries the meaning of a forceful contact with the enemy (Burrell, 2013). Having an impact then, requires discipline, it needs disciplined bodies and minds (see Foucault, 1979). The impact agenda is an "ideological discourse" modelled on a mechanistic worldview of natural science based on Newtonian causality and Deweyan pragmatism (Burrell, 2013).

Beyond such a simplistic model of force and utility, impact also requires for something to count as such. This in turn depends on the retrospective judgement of those who have the authority to give it recognition. Hence, the obligation of having an impact pushes actors, including scholars, towards keeping in line with what is valued in the current situation. The increasingly important aim to capture grants in order to do "impactful" research also sides with the interests of the currently powerful whose natural aim is to maintain the current distribution of power. As Joseph tells me, nowadays "*clearly* [management scholars'] focus of inquiry would be on businesses" (my emphasis), on doing research that companies can immediately utilize to streamline their processes or make their operations more efficient. From this perspective, it's not very surprising that in the more powerful actors' eyes FUSO "doesn't like business" (George). There may even have been a misconception from early on:

I think that in the early years when the business school [i.e. FUSO] was getting established, some people did not expect the kind of appointments and the kind of perspective [...] where the research focus is on critique and the critique of management on the basis of social scientific research [...] to be so dominant. (Thomas)

Indeed, Joseph questions the value of such a perspective when he explains that FUSO is unlike "other business schools [which] if you'd like are more in the sharp end of business and seeking actively to train managers, which I'm not sure that this business school... that's its prime *raison d'être*".

George startles me by claiming, "You know I could quote Marx: 'The role of the philosopher is not to interpret the world but to change it.'"¹³ But soon I'm not sure anymore if my Marx (or the one who was actually Co-President of the Trier Tavern Club drinking

¹³ As Marx writes in his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Engels, 1946).

society) would like to have schnapps with his Marx, when he explains that he imagines change in the form of symposia and workshops in the newly built conference centre on campus, allegedly for a ridiculously high participation fee, where the School would tell business leaders and CEOs a different story about the recent vicissitudes of the world. George juxtaposes thinking and doing here, and puts FUSO members into the position of philosophers who aren't active enough. Change in his view equals more CSR, trainings for which should preferably be promoted by proper B2B marketing. Change here is in the grip of practice, it's in the service of impact for the ends of business.

Quoting Marx of course serves a performative purpose. George shows (to me, in the first instance, but likely as a way of self-presentation to a wider audience too) that he is familiar with the social theory often used by School members. But it also implies an immanent critique of the alleged position of non-engagement with business according to the standards set by the same social theory.¹⁴ In this narrative, the School is presented as not doing enough to live up to the requirements set by itself when it comes to changing the world. It is not only interpretation, though, that is presented as not (good) enough. Adopting a stance based on critical social theory that challenges the prevailing canon of management education, in line with Delanty's third major revolution of the university, is also not enough.

Joseph tells me about the radical era of poststructuralist "anarchic" critical legal studies at Lancaster as an example of such one-sidedness that forced the institution "to move away from that because it simply wouldn't attract students actually" (Joseph). But at the same time, it would also make more orthodox scholars, who are assumed to be able to remedy the problem with student numbers, feel more isolated, hence more difficult to hire. And although "Foucauldian analysis – if that's the right adjective – [...] is a legitimate form of inquiry, [it] demands an exclusive diet" (Joseph). And that may cause colic. Consequently, "better places" (Joseph) would have a more pluralist approach to any discipline in higher education.

There's a danger of seeing everyone having to be in your mould. Can be good, can be bad. My own preference is for greater balance. To expose people, make people justify their own approach and philosophical mindset. I'm a great believer in sort of self-criticism; in being generally inquiring rather than saying everything has to work on the same rail track. (Joseph)

¹⁴ This is based on a misreading of Marx's thesis. The difference he makes is not between philosophy and activism but philosophy's search for universal explanations and radically historicized social theorizing (West, 1991). Social change in this context would precisely mean the investigation of those current conditions that put the interests of business above others, and then acting upon this to modify prevailing social conventions and power structures.

While this criticism of a certain critical orthodoxy has been raised previously among management academics too (see Visser, 2010, for instance), as I discuss in Chapter 6, CMS is far from a unified approach. It is not a single approach that needs to be complemented by others to achieve heterodoxy but rather a mixture of approaches and standpoints that each critiques application-oriented management research and education. To require justification and exposure constitutes a misreading of the distribution of power in this discourse. Since the particular discursive field in which it operates privileges managerialist approaches to management research, scholars critical of this ideology have to continually defend their philosophical stances (see, for instance, Prasad, 2013). I think believers of any approach should do this; but clearly neither has that been the case in business studies, nor do University managers present a critique to encourage such a development for any other reason but to question FUSO's approach. Implicitly, his perception of an *imbalance* drives Joseph's criticism but, ironically, he does not acknowledge this.

This argument resembles classic liberal pluralist conceptions of social life and representation. According to the liberal multicultural agenda, any social group may vie for recognition by the state and, in theory, all these groups should be treated as equals before the law and given due respect to carry on with their practices. But the pluralist discourse hides a fundamental difference in the distribution of power between the "default" position and the one(s) recognized as different, as minorities, as others. Coming back to the terrain of the University, my respondents did not, and I must assume would rarely if ever, raise the issue of how "critical" scholars may feel isolated and devalued at more orthodox business schools. Neither have they expressed that the criticality of FUSO would be more than a unique selling proposition that can help bring in more students to teach, CEOs to train, and scholars to employ. (As Joseph critically remarks, "If you look at the undergraduate figures, those are not looking terribly good. Now whether that's a feature of the distinctive take of the School, I don't know." By logical extension, whether a more pluralistic approach would bring in more students cannot be known either...)

To help improve its results in the next REF and craft its new strategic plan, the University hired a specialist consultancy in early 2015. The company had previously worked with over 45 other universities across the UK. To earn their credit, they must have done something "good", which is certainly not going to be radically different to what other universities are doing at the moment as this would result in not delivering the expected results in the current system of academic evaluation, ranking, and income-generation. USPs work along the liberal cornerstones of choice and recognizable difference; but ultimately, they just

cannot be so unique. This isomorphism has two consequences. First, universities have come a long way since Delanty's third revolution, and after a few decades of divergent routes, they are again on the same track with the business school. However, this time it is the latter that drives the development as universities are generally reliant on the lucrative surplus business schools make to cross-finance other not so marketable departments. Second, ironically enough, the particular discursive position of being unique occupied by FUSO *inside* the liberal pluralist discourse creates the School's conditions of possibility. This position provides a differentiated recognition even if it doesn't allow for systemic change, and as long as FUSO is considered a good investment, if its USP is judged to be working both in terms of attracting students and high profile researchers, it can remain in this position. The latest REF results, however, may raise questions concerning a business school that does not generally pursue managerialist research (see Section 4.2).

Crossing paths: managerialism in the university

Delanty (2002: 41) describes what he terms the "global revolution" of the university since the mid-1980s as one that can be characterized as "a counter-revolution in that the dominant tendency is reactive" because it coincides with the corporatization of the university. In the UK, since the 1980s a series of government reports represent the official policies on higher education. Under Margaret Thatcher and John Major, who were consecutive Prime Ministers from 1979 until the Labour government in 1997, in line with the general supply-side oriented restructuring of the economy, government policies were initiated to cut the per student cost of education by increasing student numbers while keeping investments at the previous level. The Jarratt Report (1985) promoted that universities adopt various corporate practices of planning, customer service, etc. The Dearing Report in 1997 facilitated the move from state-grants to private sources, mainly student loans, while at the same time it promoted the idea of quality assurance in higher education (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). The Lambert Review (HM Treasury, 2003) clearly put the needs of the national economy in a global environment before those of universities. The latter were seen as a possible source of R&D knowledge, which should be made easier to protect as intellectual property to be then transferred to companies. The Review urges for more streamlined university governance to attract more funding from private sources and it also promotes an employability-oriented view of teaching fund allocation. Recently, the Browne Report (2010) resulted in tuition fee caps set at £9,000 per year in order to increase (private)

investment into higher education. Thus, it also exacerbated students' dependence on government loans and means tested grants.¹⁵

In Delanty's own view (2002) the university as an institution is capable of quickly and effectively adapting to the requirements of the uncertain knowledge and network economy of the late 20th century. This institutional transition from dependence on the state to the market means both that the university is a source of knowledge and innovation "too important to be allowed to govern itself" (Delanty, 2002: 44) and that as only one element in a complex network of companies, consumers and other academic institutions, it cannot autonomously control all the exchanges that take place. Delanty (2002: 44) comments that "this only means a change in the relation to the state" – as if he implied it *does not* mean change in relation to capital and the market. That is, in his institutionalist explanation, the global revolution is far from a crisis, it is actually a success story. The business school then becomes a main protagonist assuming lead role as the main promoter of research into and teaching of managerialism.

In sharp contrast with Delanty's own view, several commentators indeed see these developments as reactive tendencies that have pushed higher education into crisis for the past 20 years. Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis (2010 [1993]) has been applied to the university to highlight the increasing rationalization of higher education (e.g. Hayes and Wynyard, 2002). In this process the university is becoming more managerialist (Parker, 2002), whereby university administrators and managers take over the coordination of the university's aims from academics. McGettigan (2013) adds that the move away from public funding towards private sources symbolically legitimizes managerialism. As a result, it proves nearly impossible to problematize the ends that the university aims to serve, which curbs academics' and students' right and motivation to free and independent questioning (Parker and Jary, 1995), to what Derrida (2001a: 26) calls the "right to deconstruction as an unconditional right". In this light it is hard to understand how Delanty (2002: 46) gets to the conclusion that the university "can provide the structures for public debate between expert and lay cultures".

Later considerations of the crisis turned towards the issue of marketization and financialization. Primarily building on changes in the US, Bousquet (2008) discusses the

¹⁵ Ironically, the Times Higher Education later revealed that some results of the only actual research, an opinion poll, underpinning the Browne Report were eventually omitted from the final report. The research summary stated, "Most full-time students and parents [...] believed that the government should pay at least half the cost of higher education" (Morgan, 2011). One can only speculate whether this happened because the results of the poll contradicted the government's plans.

endowment culture that actually turns universities into investment firms. Do (2008: 308) analyses the university as a place of production and “the contemporary space of command, a site where division and control become imposed onto the workforce” by discrediting certain knowledges, prioritizing particular locations for earning the same degrees, and rendering students as precarious workers. Or even more often students are “offered” exploitation as temporarily “warehoused” (Harney, 2010) cheap student labour and increasingly as unpaid interns with the hope of getting valuable experience. On the other hand, members of academic staff are increasingly turned into precarious workers without ever reaching tenure in the USA or on zero-hour teaching only contracts in the UK.

Students under these conditions take on such an amount of debt that often ensures their dependence on any form of paid employment for decades (see Beverungen, Dunne and Hoedemaekers, 2009). In the UK, the £3,000 per year undergraduate fees originally meant *additional* funding for universities. But the £9,000 fees introduced in 2012 following the recommendations of the Browne Report are actually replacing central government funding. McGettigan (2013) calls this process of substituting private sources of income for public ones, “internal privatization”. As a consequence, “money will now increasingly follow the student [that] encourages the applicant to consider undergraduate study as a form of ‘human capital’ investment” (McGettigan, 2013: 25). An investment, though, that may easily default if it turns out to be a “subprime degree” (McGettigan, 2013: 104) for students who cannot find jobs with degrees from “worse” but equally expensive institutions – an effect of the differentiation Do (2008) talks about. As a result, by now we also know that loan outpace repayments are likely to be lower than originally calculated in 2010, effectively making the government’s claims about public savings and austerity void (McGettigan, 2013).

The value of education in this context translates into the primacy of applied (and profitable) research and departments (Newfield, 2004). Or as Locke and Spender (2011: 102) snappily put it, “at the end of the twentieth century [...] the issue for higher education is not science versus the humanities but science/humanities versus money/managerialism”. Newfield (2004, 2008) shows how commercialization of US universities puts into question at once academic freedom and the financial health of institutions. Talking specifically about the UK, McGettigan (2013: 4) discusses three implicit quality-related issues regarding “the credo that ‘competition is a tide which lifts every boat’”. First, that quality may not mean academic quality but investment into student experience (as money spent on sports halls, conference centres, etc. proves). Second, that as a consequence of privatization and liberalization more money needs to be spent on marketing and recruitment, since it is the

individual who is expected to make the right decision about their investment now. League tables supposedly help them with the comparison and marketing messages regarding the uniqueness of each place. Their importance for staff members is revealed when I ask Jack about the slogan of MUSO, “Oh yeah, we also have one...wait, let me think”. Finally, that with the student numbers capped, higher education institutions have to fight for market share, which can be destructive. Responding to these problems, Newfield’s combined move forward would entail “regulation of new kinds of academic marketing,” “teaching for participation,” and creating “knowledge commons” (2004: 56–57).

Bousquet (2008) proposes acts of resistance and unionisation as solutions to the problems discussed, but he doesn’t reveal in detail how and with what scope exactly he imagines these efforts. And while, at least rhetorically, they try to avoid nostalgia towards an earlier state, Parker and Jary (1995) suggest a combination of broader engagement with universities’ own localities; returning to academic self-governance from managerialism; as well as individual and collective resistance and reflexivity. The outlook for these suggestions is bleak though. Engagement mostly happens through university councils as discussed earlier and as FUSO’s experience shows collaborations with local hospitals, SMEs and the city council (or their presentation in the case studies) have not been particularly rewarded by the REF panel for business and management. A return to self-governance is utopian at the moment as higher education administrators increasingly govern and run academic life. Finally, collective resistance is fading with members of the University and College Union (UCU), the biggest union of academic staff in higher education, repeatedly resorting to accepting slightly amended offers from university management – often in fear of a crackdown otherwise at individually targeted members. Besides, the already rather regulated strike laws are currently planned to make it even more difficult for unions in the public sector to initiate strike action.

Logically rationalization, marketization, and the prevalence of applied science should not present such a serious problem for business schools. However, these processes have put the business school in a situation of crisis too, of its own kind. Its privileged status in the contemporary world means that business and management education is expected even more to satisfy the needs of their high fee-paying student-customers. Taken to the extreme, customers’ expectations circle around providing them with marketable skills, preparing them for “real life”, and ultimately helping them land a well-paid job. Academics are increasingly judged on the basis of feedback about the satisfaction of these customers (see Uttl, White and Wong Gonzalez, 2016), who are often driven by ends as opposed to a well-rounded

education (see Barnett, 2010; Blackmore, 2009; Morley, 2003; Singh, 2002). The pursuit of applied science hence is translated into readily applicable knowledge and skills.

Especially around and after the global economic downturn after 2008, management education has been identified as a culprit in propagating a business culture of individualism, greed, and unnecessary risk-taking (James, 2009; see also Tourish, Craig and Amernic, 2010). The prevalence of managerialism in higher education, as an extreme form of treating management as the only possible solution to any problem, should not be understood, following Delanty (2002), as institutional agility but rather as something disruptive. Business schools, judged this way, are in crisis not because they do not satisfy the needs of business and their own customers well enough but because business and management studies actually sustains and reproduces these needs. It does so by perpetrating the image of a clean world in which there is no war, famine, or class struggle (Harney and Dunne, 2013), and there is hardly any youth unemployment.

4.2. Stories of three research quality measurements

I argued in the previous section, that generally since the 1980s universities have become more dependent on their business schools. Keeping this context in mind, in the following three sections I recount a possible history of FUSO inside Flatshire University through the last three UK research quality assessments. The following sections qualify and localize the general context, leading to the conclusion that Flatshire University's *informal dependence* on FUSO makes the former more aware of the perceived need to exercise its *formal power* to manage the School.

Despite the scathing evaluations of managerialism in the university and the business school, bringing about change in curricula, teaching methods, or research topics is rather difficult. As I have argued, they may have problems on the interface with business and society, but at the moment the university and the business school are on a shared trajectory. Critique under these conditions is possible as long as the power relation between these two entities is balanced due to good REF results, rising student intake, and satisfactory grant capture. However, as soon as the critically-oriented business school doesn't live up to any of these requirements, it is its criticality that is questioned and scrutinized first.

This situation creates a push towards entering an elaborate dance of both conforming to the expectations of the system, consequently performing well in it, and challenging its various bits and pieces. As Daniel, a senior manager of FUSO says, he sees himself “as a

mediator” between these two expectations. As an outcome, staff members are also complicit in sustaining the current structure. This may be so because they have a vested interest in maintaining their identity as researchers, and the REF serves as a perfect vehicle to do this (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012). It has also been argued (Grey and Willmott, 2005; Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011) that social scientists who ended up in business schools are in fact usually very research prolific, and can represent a good investment for the REF submission of their respective universities.

REF 2014: the question of quality

As I have already discussed, Flatshire University senior management have traditionally perceived FUSO as good at scholarly inquiry but failing on impactful action. In REF 2014, the School achieved a solid performance at 3* level (research output that is judged “internationally excellent”) but in terms of 4* (“world-leading”) publications, it scored overall approximately 10 percentage points below the average. This is below the result that had been expected by Flatshire University management from FUSO. Most people in higher education are aware that the system is rigged but often treat it as an external factor that any competitive institution has to adapt to, rather than a contingent context that could be changed collectively.

Two caveats apply though. First, if intensity (percentage of eligible staff submitted) and research power (number of full-time equivalent staff) are taken into account the ranking changes at some places fundamentally. Several universities have attempted to game the system by not submitting all their staff but only the “best” people, this way skewing the results based on research output alone (Lilley and Parker, 2015). Second, not only is research deemed “internationally recognized” and “nationally recognized” (2* and 1*) highly discounted, in which categories FUSO performs considerably better than the UK average, but these are regarded not to have any significant value. Consider the plausible assumption (and my own life experience) that more of such research is published in open access journals in contrast with most of 3-4* research published in prestigious journals hidden behind paywalls, unaffordable for individuals and institutions on the global periphery.

So when the vice-chancellor announces that it is “quality not quantity” that matters for research output,¹⁶ we get a glimpse of what he might mean. Quality in this sense is not

¹⁶ The vice-chancellor lays out a new strategic plan for Flatshire University (January 2015).

about the research but about the output generated from it, the publication of which determines largely every step in the process of preparing that output (Parker, 2014b). Quality

is an ascription of value, a determination which is not given by the text itself but by the way in which it is read. Good work [...] is what the powerful at the centre of a discipline believe to be good, simply because these are the people who decide what sort of work gets into [elite journals] (Parker, 2014: 260, 262).

Quality is a performative self-referential “measure” that creates the illusion of “being of quality” by engaging in social practices that scholars whose research is deemed high quality do. An illusion which is nonetheless very material in its effects.

Butler and Spoelstra (2012) argue that, rather ironically, critical scholars are already too implicated in this system to be able to “respond” to it as if they did so from a position on some imagined outside. Playing the game of academic publishing changes the players who might criticize the system for its prioritization of journal articles over monographs, for its drive toward conformity, for its crunching of slow science, but would nevertheless subscribe to these requirements and adopt tactics to navigate within the system (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012; Clarke et al., 2012). Which is not too surprising given that when things work well there is a mutual benefit to be gained here by both universities and staff members in terms of reputation and income. In fact, to reiterate a point made earlier, it is precisely FUSO’s participation in this “system of licensed boasting” (Morley, 2013: 3) that grants it the academic freedom to perform critique.

However, if things are uncertain or do not seem to be going well, university managers may resort to classical motivation theory, and use sticks as much as carrots to make academic mules reach management targets. In 2013, the *Times Higher Education* narrated fears that the University, singled out as the only one in the report and quoting a pro-Vice-Chancellor in support, would re-evaluate the contracts of those staff members whose research is not included in the REF submission.¹⁷ And more widely in the UK, a survey by the UCU showed that 53% of those asked feared losing their jobs in case they were not included in the REF submission (Jump, 2013). None of this actually happened after the results were published in December 2014. But as we know from game theory, a threat only needs to be credible to produce an effect – of pushing staff members towards conformity to the system in this case.

¹⁷ Reference omitted to protect my respondents’ identities.

RAE 2008: CMS based growth

Previously the system was indeed working well. In 2008, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), as it was called back then, put FUSO's output approximately 15 percentage points above the UK average.¹⁸ Besides, in the final report on the business and management subject field, a non-identified panel member wrote a strategically rather important statement:

The high quality of outputs has been facilitated by European journals (e.g. *Organization Studies*, *Organization*, *Human Relations*, *Ephemera*) becoming more international in orientation while North American journals (e.g. *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*) have become somewhat more receptive to a wider range of submissions.

Outputs ranged across diverse topics such as change, culture, leadership, managerial work, ethics, education and methodology. Well represented approaches to these topics included narrative analysis, discourse analysis, labour process analysis and institutional theory. These are increasingly being applied in the development of other areas, such as marketing and information systems. The spread and influence of critical management studies during the assessment period was evident in a significant proportion of the outputs. (RAE, 2009: 11–12)

The recognition given to CMS, to a variety of affiliated journals, and to fields and methods of inquiry put FUSO too in a more recognized position. The report quoted represented at the highest national institutional level that approaches based on a critical evaluation of business, management and organization are intelligible in this discourse and have a legitimate voice to speak (Butler, 2004). A very similar statement was repeated in the REF 2014 panel report on business and management studies. However, its performative effect (at the moment of writing in January 2015) appears to be much smaller. Coming out is a powerful act but once the difference is established, its revelatory potential disappears (see Chapter 3). CMS has come to be treated as a recognized minority that is nevertheless judged by the same standards of output and impact as the dominant scholarship in business and management.

The outcomes of RAE 2008 translated into a good position on league tables to draw in students and indeed to market FUSO both towards University management and

¹⁸ Looking at FUSO's RAE2008 and REF2014 results, it is interesting to see that in terms of scholarly outputs deemed 1-4* it has largely held its position. Moreover, there has been a 6%point drop in 1* publications that have added to the percent of 2* publications in the REF. What changed then, we must infer, is the framework on the one hand with its focus on impact; and that other schools have become "better" on average (i.e. they have managed to step up their submissions, conform to the system or game it) on the other. It can only be said in this light that the results of the REF 2014 are of lower standard than those of RAE 2008. To repeat an important point, quality measurement cannot claim anything about some inherent value.

prospective job applicants. Although this may have meant rather a means to convince people that the project is working than raising awareness of it among job applicants. As common in any closely-knit academic community, scholars in the field of CMS had known each other rather well. Several staff members have supervised other staff members, people migrated together from other universities that had become more managerial at a point (see Chapter 6).

RAE 2001: what is a business school for?

The 2008 results presented a huge improvement over RAE 2001, when FUSO was ranked in the middle of the range with a much lower level of research active staff than the UK average in business and management. At the same time, it had a significant amount of revenue from providing distance-learning courses online. In this situation Flatshire University's senior management had several options. As Thomas, a senior manager of the University who was present at the discussions summarized,

once you hire the founding professor you actually set the department on a particular course of development. [...] And after a long discussion we decided that the kind of person we wanted to lead [FUSO] would create some language that is very distinctive.

Let me situate this decision in the context of the history of business education in the UK. Tiratsoo (1998) argues that management education in Britain developed rather slowly after 1945 due to a variety of wider social factors and government policies. Up until the 1960s, management education as a field was fighting for recognition and acceptance at universities being often disregarded as an issue of vocational education that moreover deals with was largely judged an innate ability to manage. So it took the newly formed Foundation for Management Education several years of lobbying behind the scenes to change public opinion and “gradually create a situation where business schools might be formed” (Tiratsoo, 1998: 115).¹⁹ By the mid-1960s, there are still only a handful of business schools in Britain in relative independence from their respective universities – but also still a lack of agreement on whether schools should follow businesses' advice and provide vocational education, and how exactly they should teach students.

The subsequent period till the end of the 1980s saw a significant growth in business education but neither business was convinced about its worth, nor academics were satisfied

¹⁹ Similarities between this self-elected organization of believers in US style management education and the currently existing Association of Business Schools may be farfetched but are not without any foundation.

with the limited ability to pursue scholarly research. Around that time the idea for a unified national representative body starts to develop and the Association of Business Schools (ABS) is eventually launched in 1992 with the previously rehearsed aims of retaining more of business schools' income for developing management education (and for not cross-financing other fields), developing more quantitative measures of output (as opposed to qualitative descriptors of input) besides its general mission of lobbying and representation (Williams, 2007). But even at the end of the millennium management education in Britain, either at business schools or corporate training centres, was not as important as it was in other countries and "British management has largely performed without education and training for virtually all of the postwar years" (Tiratsoo, 1998: 123).

Since the mid-1990s, the number of schools providing business education has remained constantly around 100-120 in the UK. In 1994-95 there were 124,428 business and management students in full-time and another 88,931 in part-time education, comprising 13.61% of all students in higher education (HESA, 1996). By 2013, the numbers have increased to 254,275 full-time and 82,970 part-time students, altogether 14.41% of all students (HESA, 2014). The numbers are up to interpretation when it comes to the "success" of business and management education. As the percentages show, the growth of student intake is in line with the general widening access to higher education – it is not the case that business and management would have become more important than it was in the 1990s. But the sheer growth in full-time student numbers, changes in the fee structure, and universities' reliance on income from their business schools has necessitated the growth of business schools in terms of staff size and campus space.

As a relative latecomer into this growth of business education in the early 2000s, it makes understandable business sense for Flatshire University to try and set up a school that is distinctly different. Eventually the vice-chancellor and the Board decide to appoint someone as Head of School with a free hand in using the surplus money to bring in research-prolific staff in hope of better RAE results in the future. But there was another consideration – and for this we have to go back to Tiratsoo's (1998) conclusions about the reasons for the sustained scepticism regarding business schools in the UK. First, he mentions that prospective governments never really backed up any of the initiatives – at least until the late 1990s. Second, internal disagreements between management educators whether the US model or post-experience programmes were more suitable, which have also contributed to

making it hard to have management accepted as a legitimate field of study.²⁰ Third, that management culture in the UK generally values assertiveness and ingenuity over theoretically rigorous thinking. With the emphasis on practical relevance, business and management studies is still considered a cash cow of universities (Morgan, 2013) where often only limited scholarly engagement takes place (cf. Dunne, Harney and Parker, 2008). Fourth, “[e]mployers have generally believed that they were paying managers to manage, *not ruminare about wider social problems*” (Tiratsoo, 1998: 125, my emphasis).

One would have expected this sentiment to change with the major ethical misdeeds of the past two decades and the global crisis after 2008 but reports generally point to contradictory changes (Curtis, Harney and Jones, 2013). As we have seen earlier, Khurana (2007) does not agree with commentators on the crisis of the business school like Ghoshal (2005) and Mintzberg (2004), who believe that the ethos of management is only temporarily lost in the current capitalist system (Beverungen, 2010). For Khurana (2007) the whole project of managerialism – here used as a positive term – needs to be substituted by alternative visions of organization. In this sense, the proposal by Bennis and O’Toole (2005) and Pfeffer and Fong (2002) that business schools should return to the professional school model of law and medicine is not satisfactory. This model has proven questionable on many occasions. Tinker (2004) warns against considering professional associations optimistically, since their primary interest is in securing their own practitioners’ status and exclusive role in a certain field by regulations as well as controlling changes to what counts as professional knowledge. Tinker recites accountancy as an example of such processes closest to the business school and he concludes, “it is those MBAs [who take hardly any accounting courses], and the *professional* education system that produces them, that we have to thank for the blight of capital markets” (Tinker, 2004: 75). It may be a perceived lack of alternatives or mourning the lost past that eventually bring Khurana back to advocating for the professional model (Khurana and Nohria, 2008).

I do not claim that the senior management team appointing the Head of School carefully considered *all* of these factors. But their quest to be different from other business schools was served well by confronting British managers’ attitude towards social problems and reflecting on the structural conditions in which management knowledge is produced. They did not opt for someone who would develop FUSO as a business school “where [...]

²⁰ Although, as Engwall and Zamagni (1998) argue, the “American model” has never been an actually existing creation of looking at US MBA programmes from Europe. In fact, there was a convergence between business schools in the US from the 1950s but they have always differed in terms of degrees offered, educational practices, and research orientation.

people could perform, you know, operational research, accounting and finance, industrial relations – specialisms you normally associate” (Thomas) or set it up as a professional school, which might have had even less purchase given the historical distrust towards management education in the UK. Thus, it happened not only by coincidence but also conscious consideration that, besides having formal credentials, the newly appointed Head was associated with CMS.

And how does one establish something, which is towards the tail end of the institutional establishment of schools of management and business schools? [FUSO was] a very late entrant to a market, so strategically what do you do? All that business policy stuff. But the other is, try and maintain some sort of critical perspective [...] to get some sense of a strategy and a mission or whatever which is not typical, and get noticed [...] So it’s a mixture of both. (Harry)

When asked about the years after the new Head’s appointment, Thomas reflects

it seems to me that he has established it with a very strong presence, with very high quality staff and high quality research activity where the research focus is on critique and the critique of management on the basis of social scientific research. That seems to me to fulfil the remit admirably.

Reflecting on FUSO’s achievements in 2014, Thomas, who retired soon after, was likely trying to emphasize his legacy and undeniable role in the selection process during the interview. He could not have foreseen how the results of the REF would be evaluated by Flatshire University’s new senior management team. But FUSO’s establishment may have become too successful in a few years. Responding to the pressure of publishing to receive generous public funding and good league table positions, as we have seen over the last three sections, Flatshire University took the first occasion when FUSO’s results happened not to “fulfil the remit” to increase the level of direct management.

4.3. Organizing the unquestionable context

FUSO has undoubtedly produced a lot of income for Flatshire University over the past years. Daniel, a senior member of FUSO, informs me that “the surplus of the School roughly equals the surplus of the University”. When, partly based on this piece of information, interviewing Joseph I introduce a question by mentioning that FUSO has been doing well in the last years, he corrects me immediately. It has been performing well on a number of criteria, he says, “but whether it could be doing better is a moot point” (Joseph) and his opinion has certainly become more articulate after REF 2014. A classic Gramscian (1992) understanding of hegemony as continuous struggle as opposed to hegemony as unity explains this situation.

FUSO is allowed to be different as long as it struggles to perform better, until it accepts the “common sense” idea about the uses of business (and economic) growth. Which it does because it has to, there is no alternative, “growth, as our cancer, is the way forward” (Daniel).

So much so, that FUSO’s senior management organized an Away Day, as the email about it stated, to spend “some time away from the day to day grind”. The main reason of the meeting appeared to be the necessity of responding to growth in staff numbers (but also in student numbers, complexity of operations, and revenue) in terms of management structure and external requirements. A senior member of staff presents the proposed new governance structure, which is said to be an absolutely open playing field, just a “doodle” in which only the positions of the Head of School and Head of Administration are fixed. However, Riley (a faculty member) concurs with me in a break, “and feel free to quote me on this,” that this is a structured field. Choices are confined by reference to Flatshire University’s requirement of growth as a baseline that FUSO cannot question. Or at least so people are told. Further, the format of the meeting, roughly two and a half hours spent on discussing the new structure in a plenary session and four working groups that convene at the end, is not adequate. This time is not enough to discuss all issues, complains Riley, there is hardly any interpenetration between the groups. As Amelia tells me in an interview later,

There are people in this School who have written and thought about a) organizational structures and b) about organizational change. And I for one can provide five straightforward reasons for why the proposed reorganization in terms of the end result is a very bad idea. Let alone how the change has been, you know...let alone the approaches of managing change as well.

Part of that is that no decisions are made at the end of the Away Day. Such a postponement is a recurrent theme across the meetings I have observed to the extent that one cannot really know where decisions are taken. If there are any decisions to be *made* at all given the recurrent references to the University’s and College’s “processes” and “requirements”. Various committees at FUSO regularly collect reports on the development of specific tasks and then delegate these again to other committees or working groups to continue toiling away. This highlights the rather contingent nature of decision making as opposed to any textbook-like methodical description of the process.

Decisions are nevertheless made at least at two places that I observed. One of these was in a small dimly lit windowless seminar room with a conference-like circle of tables and wooden plank walls located underground in the basement of a building that once used to be a lunatic asylum. I visited a meeting of the Strategy and Policy Committee there, which is FUSO’s highest-level decision-making body with membership limited to heads of research

groups, programme leaders, and the senior management of the School. It is most likely by sheer coincidence that the meeting took place there that time but it well symbolizes just how hidden decision-making is from the regular member of staff. Second, decision-making appears to be much more rooted in the everyday practices (such as informal chats, filling forms, meeting deadlines, etc.) than being made at meetings, which are nevertheless on paper convened to precisely that end. No wonder, several staff members have expressed to me their utter boredom regarding these meetings where nothing happens. As Henry, a lecturer, joked at another meeting, “Do we echo the students’ concern about having more clarity at the top levels of the School regarding responsibilities?” And then satirically remarked, “we would all like that” (Henry).

However, this same mentality can become problematic when carried over to other meetings where decisions should really be made. The monthly Staff Consultative Committee, historically used to provide a forum for anyone in academic or professional roles to express their concerns. Officially, though, its description only says that it is “advisory to the Head of School” and neither topics, nor decision-making powers are mentioned.²¹ At a meeting I have been to, numerous discussions caused a stir, and with several items on the agenda for two hours, the Chair rather often intended to rush these. Hence, he ended the major debates and discussions by stating, “we can’t resolve these issues here but it’s important we’ve raised them” (Isaac). It is not surprising that several people I talked to stopped attending these meetings altogether.

There is a management issue here if we go by the textbook. Of course senior School members have read (and even written) some of the textbooks and recognize that “we are not able to follow decisions through” (Daniel). Meetings where nothing happens arguably contribute to a loss of efficiency for the organization. But my concern here has been rather different. There are several faculty members studying and participating in (or, to say the least, interested in) organization of social movements, forms of organization alternative to the capitalist enterprise, co-operatives, and commons. How come these people have not been able to create a sustainable organizational model for their operations different to the oft-criticized ones? FUSO’s immense growth over the past five years may play a crucial role here. A senior manager of the University has announced that this tendency is likely to continue in the future if targets in student numbers are met. While the latter is a critical condition, the idea of growth in itself most likely presents an irresolvable challenge. For it is a fundamental condition of capitalism, which several researchers at FUSO question in their scholarship.

²¹ School Committees Organogram, 2012.

So far I have been concerned in this chapter with the practices that keep the current systems in place. This has meant both practices of staff members of FUSO and of people who are perceived as the context. These two are inseparable because staff members, whether willingly or not, partake in sustaining the current system. Capitalist relations of production are not external to these relationships and practices. It is not a separate unidirectional macro-level influence on the local but something that is very immanent to everyday practices. Neoliberal capitalism operates through production and the (illusory) idea of choice. Staff members are free to choose any form of critique as long as they fulfil the fundamental condition of growth. But growth paradoxically thrives even on the idea of creating a safe haven for more likeminded scholars in an increasingly utilitarian educational (and intellectual) system.

Growth may as well provoke a radical widening of the spectrum of theoretical-political orientation of staff, which could also help to capture grants and create impact. It would certainly strengthen FUSO's position in the eyes of senior management of Flatshire University. It could also encourage a rapprochement between different approaches to management. At the same time, it would also mean becoming more implicated in the system that Butler and Spoelstra (2012) describe. In this sense, adopting a "heterodox" approach that some at FUSO have suggested to me risks conserving the status quo, being the recognized minority in the pluralist model university management appears to have in mind. Others are more critical of the heterodox approach, and would favour not even engaging in any serious discussion with University management sharing the belief of Burrell (2001: 20) who describes "[t]he uncertainty arising from the lack of dialogue [as] a weapon of the powerless".

Self-perception is as important as self-presentation as I show in the next section, and although there is not much discussion about it at the Away Day, someone worriedly asks whether they are "resisting falling into a structure that many other business schools have" (Isabelle). Because such schools are not good places as recent stories from Queen Mary's (Bignell, 2012; Colquhoun, 2012; Gaskell, 2012; Vinson, 2012) and the Euro Business School (Parker, 2014a) as well as lots of unreferenceable rumours demonstrate. Questions of structure here overlap with questions of identity. At meetings I have heard Warwick, Birmingham, Nottingham and "post-1992 teaching-only universities" mentioned as examples of what "we" are currently not but risk drifting towards. Someone on the corridor tells me that they had tried basic democratic means before but it did not work in practice. Surely, it may not be the most (time) efficient form of deciding issues and as we've seen

current practices have been deferring the opportunity for such alternative organizations. In lieu of a positive identity-claim, these negations serve to externalize what FUSO is not. This externalization of the financialized university and other business schools as the constitutive outside of critically-oriented schools is an everyday practice of their members – and not a pre-given context.

4.4. The global context: to be or not to appear different

In 2014 FUSO was in the process of preparing for initiating the accreditation process with EQUIS, the quality improvement system of the European Foundation for Management Development. This is one of the three major international organizations (the other two being the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB] and the Association of MBAs [AMBA]) that issue a stamp to prove that the institution they accredit operates at the level of their international benchmark. EQUIS claims to base award of the certificate on the evaluation of a body of international peer-reviewer scholar-inspectors, who are expected to be wine-and-dined for a maximum of €6,000 while they do their job for the €46,200 that their not-for-profit mother organization cashes in for any successful 3-year accreditation (EFMD, 2016). Such an investment “delivers many potential advantages” to FUSO, stated an all-staff email about the process. Most importantly, it helps the School get into or get further ahead in (inter)national rankings of business and management schools. Higher league table positions as previously discussed are expected to bring in more students paying in more fees that further the continuous expansion. Based on this promise and the EQUIS requirement that business schools under consideration must have authority over promotion, appointment, and use of their own surplus, the certificate might be used as leverage against Flatshire University to commit more admin staff, academic posts, and financial resources.

At this point, it seems only secondary that this process should also facilitate the initial aim of reconsidering FUSO’s structure. In the era of Delanty’s fourth, global revolution of the university accreditation by international bodies has arguably become important. Proponents of acquiring such certifications highlight their capability to differentiate a growing but relatively small number of institutions in the increasingly global race for students and excellent staff, partly by making schools clarify the selling propositions and target markets (Trapnell, 2007; Zammuto, 2008). Critics, on the other hand, argue that accreditation hollows out the content of business education in an effort to provide such general criteria that can be fulfilled in a variety of global locations, thus defying the standardization purpose

of accreditation, while the peer-review system at operation sustains traditionally accepted forms of knowledge creation and management education (Lowrie and Willmott, 2009). This is not necessarily a consequence of isomorphism resulting from competitive pressures – although with the corporatization of universities this may become more pressing in my opinion – but primarily from vying to secure “political power and institutional legitimacy” (Wilson and McKiernan, 2011: 461).

Signing up to EQUIS requires fulfilling their quality criteria, which places “the School’s activities [...] within the transversal issues of Corporate Connections, Internationalisation and Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability” (EFMD, n.d.: 6). First, EQUIS give the same importance to these three transversal considerations by listing them next to each other. This is interesting in itself because one would think ethical considerations would have to underpin, for example, internationalization too. Ironically but tellingly, at an informational meeting when asked by FUSO members, EQUIS representatives could not give an actual example of how their own organization acts to comply with their own ethics criteria. As we have seen in a previous case, any list is an ordered list; and corporate connections here are given a more important place than ethics. Should the two be in conflict, it is likely to be corporate connections that determine how EQUIS applicants would understand and practice ethics, responsibility and sustainability. This is not too surprising if we consider that “EFMD views business schools as analogous to medical or law schools in which it is necessary not only to teach the theories of the disciplines but also to teach and develop skills in their practice” (EFMD, n.d.: 6). Such an approach of a professional school of management does not adequately describe what is happening in most business schools nowadays and is a rather contested analogy as we have already seen. Furthermore, EQUIS criteria would push business scholars to straightjacket their teaching and research, to the contrary of opening management intellectuals’ responsibility up to wider social issues (Dunne, Harney and Parker, 2008). Putting the corporate interest first would also make FUSO depart from its conviction that “the depth of our commitment to sustainable, responsible, ethically inspired management puts us ahead of the curve” (FUSO Vision Statement). Or as a senior manager of the University critically sums up, “there is an anti-capitalist stance here” (George).

If we accept this description for a moment, the category of corporate connections for the EQUIS accreditation becomes a challenging one. The official brochure explains that “Business Schools [...] need to be closely connected to the corporate world (widely defined as private and public sector) which is the end users of their output of graduates and of

knowledge created by the School” (EFMD, n.d.: 6). This definition is in sharp contrast with some espoused values of the School. I wonder if the “wide” definition of corporate cited above includes “alternative organizations such as co-operatives, communes, credit unions, microfinance providers, Local Exchange and Trading Schemes, the Fair Trade movement and so on” (FUSO brochure). The discourse of “end users” and an “output of graduates” seems to fit better with a mechanistic description of a Fordist factory than with any sense of “perpetually immature, perpetually premature, perpetually unready”, critical and political open-ended “study” (Bousquet, Harney and Moten, 2009: 160). Finally, it is incomprehensible that “knowledge created by the School” may not aim to directly satisfy corporate (and EQUIS) requirements. As a FUSO brochure states, “We want to challenge common assumptions about the techniques and goals of organizing, managing, accounting, finance and marketing in a globalizing world. [...] Good research should question the status quo and is therefore often radical in its conclusions”. When EQUIS puts its brand on “good research”, it acquires symbolic ownership of the knowledge created.

Even if this only requires a different presentation of the same research, as it usually is the case with different audiences, the need to engage in such conscious self-*re*presentation has an immediate effect on academics’ work pressure as well as it is actually performatively shaping both researchers’ identities and the world around them. To navigate this divide, FUSO members often rely on the discursive separation of the context from their own lifeworld; they create the discursive outside. Sources of anything bad are often externally attributed. The EQUIS accreditation, which may seem like a much bigger and more important generally disliked initiative only at first sight, has also been explained invoking external factors; in Daniel’s words, it is necessary because “if we don’t do it to ourselves, somebody will do it to us”.

Once the inside and the outside are separated, the discourse of a real core versus a projected image is drawn on. “Why is this so important?”, I ask myself when the professor coordinating the EQUIS application asserts for the third time during the same meeting that he was just put in charge, he did not choose to do this. He is performing on various stages for diverse audiences: a suffering hero for colleagues at FUSO, a ruthless executor of radical change for Flatshire University, a candid observer of soft-paced evolution for the EQUIS accreditors. The latter want “us” to demonstrate actual processes and not fluffy descriptions, which means “we have to *design* our system or... *present* our system in a way that speaks to [their] criteria” (Alexander, my emphasis). Speakers usually repeat the predicate in such a way when the first verb does not exactly capture what they actually wanted to say, when they

want to make their statement clearer by adding or swapping another word for the original one. The emphasis that here slides from designing a system to presenting it, is sustained throughout the discussion.

The same perception is reinforced at the meeting of the Strategy and Policy Committee a few days later. Participants here twice return to a discussion about how FUSO is invisible, although they are involved with various chambers of commerce and business associations in the UK. At the Away Day school members are reminded that they already do things that could count as corporate connections; we only need to “position” ourselves correctly “spinning” these examples for EQUIS by “articulating” them the right way to “showcase” our unique approach. How can the EQUIS accreditation process be truly a vehicle for change in the School without believing in it? This may have been one of the reasons why the project was put on hold indefinitely a few months later; other reasons being a new vice-chancellor being appointed with potentially new ideas about what FUSO should be doing and the REF results coming out at the end of the year.

4.5. Conclusion

It seems to me that the aim is to communicate that FUSO members have already been doing the things wanted from them while leaving intact what they actually do. This fits in with the fragmentation between different articulations of universities and business schools over the decades reviewed in this chapter. The founding of FUSO as a place that is different from most business schools puts it in a contradictory position when the context around it changes. Layers of the past remain as the emphasis moves from fitting in while appearing unique to remaining different while appearing the same. It is like play pretend or an attempt pass unrecognizably as if FUSO were not a queer place of sorts. But where does the play or the pretending stop?

I have argued in this chapter that this question is meaningless. The various meetings, teaching, or research are equally part of the performance. Pretend play can be dangerous; FUSO may risk becoming-horse like little Hans (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 278–287). Passing is dangerous too, in another sense, for being revealed may draw unwanted attention onto what is going on. Whether exercising impact or trying to demonstrate it, both activities are performed for a reason and both create who “we” are. At the end of the Away Day, the person leading the discussion points out that “the lack or perceived lack of participation is due to people not feeling involved, informed” (Isaac). Actual and perceived, being and

feeling are often used but indeed complex binary oppositions my respondents draw on that here signals a set of internal differences amongst School members. Next, in Chapter 5, I map several of these subject positions in an attempt to identify how these contribute to the institutionalization of a critical school of business and management.

CHAPTER 5

US AND US:

SUBJECT POSITIONS INSIDE THE SCHOOLS

When I spot my supervisors from a distance on campus, they are vigorously discussing something. As I get closer, it becomes obvious that they are talking about my work, not necessarily about *me* but I cannot help not to understand it that way. I have (like I believe most of us do) a tendency to generalize statements about my work as if they were statements about *myself*, as if they described me in my totality as a coherent subject. Discrimination works the same way and reflexivity, if understood as the imperative to know thyself, can be seen as a form of self-inflicted psychic violence.

“We might even ask him when we meet”, says one of them.

“It ultimately depends on how adventurous he wants to be”.

“On how unorthodox he thinks he can write”.

“On how adventurous we allow him to think he can be...”

Or on what he is capable of, I think to myself or maybe semi-loudly, I cannot quite tell. I tend to mumble when I do not feel confident or comfortable. This has to do less with the act of uttering words or the language – I do the same in Hungarian. Rather it is somehow my mind that mumbles, it is the hesitant process of looking for a thought that is worthy of being spoken, trying to find how to describe what I feel, who I am. As Butler (2005) reminds us, it is impossible to give a full account of oneself. Such accounts are always given for someone else, in response to a relational expectation of an other, and that the language used to describing ourselves, “the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making” (Butler, 2005: 21). We are “opaque” to ourselves but it is in response to the ethical need to continually re-

describe ourselves by giving various accounts of who we are, what we do, where we have been, and so on that our subject is constituted. Not being fully in control of what and how we say, however, means that “when we do act and speak, we not only disclose ourselves but act on the schemes of intelligibility that govern who will be a speaking being, subjecting them to rupture or revision, consolidating their norms, or contesting their hegemony” (Butler, 2005: 132).

Three minutes later there we are, my supervisors and I, sitting in a café discussing the first draft of the first chapter of analysis I had sent them. They liked it – phew! – as a first draft... Questions of clarifying the structure and some of the arguments aside, they tell me that I should think about the voice I have. Because at the moment the more personal and political comments and use of adjectives at some points feels like an intruder into the rhetorically more “objective,” observant ethnographic voice. Just like this, here, now. It is here that subject positions become important as they may signal accepted ways of presenting oneself in a community. Giving an account implies testing that account for the reactions of the other for whom we always naturally pre-mediate what we say. This is true as much for the participants in my interviews as it is for the questions that I asked them; and is also true for writing the draft of this text at this moment in anticipation of what the first readers might say. And, probably for the reader, in terms of what they might say. What clichés they might fall into, and what judgements they might conceal, now that I have shown myself to be vulnerable.

So how shall I respond to this call for reflexivity, especially that mostly what I feel amidst all this PhD-work right now is “being lost”? I am lost in the wealth of “my” data (largely, the accounts “you” have given in response to my call) and in what it means to analyse and give a true account, and indeed who has the power that decides what a true account is. I am lost in my text in an immediate sense, and in terms of losing my line of thought too, having responded to frequent enunciations of “I’m hungry” that hail me (Althusser, 1977) as a father. Being lost is nevertheless fine. Not only does apparently everyone go through such stages in their doctoral research but also if I knew what I was doing that would probably foreclose any chance for *original* research. If I knew what to do that would foreclose the ethical relationship with participants in this research (Rhodes, 2009). Being lost is not enough in itself, it is just a basis for a decision to be made – in this case regarding reflexivity.

In what follows, I present how critically-oriented business and management schools are actually rather more fragmented than the discussion in Chapter 4 would suggest. My aim in this chapter is to identify subject positions, which emerge as nodes in any discursive

structure that make certain subjectivities possible but are also open to transformation (“dislocation”) themselves (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 115). Or as Hall (1995: 65) says, “You only discover who you are because of the identities [a term he uses interchangeably with subject position] you are required to take on, into which you are interpellated: but you must take up those positionalities, however temporarily, in order to act at all”. It is important for articulation theory to identify such subject positions as these show the existing hegemony but also highlight that hegemony doesn’t mean unity and lack of contestation. The identification of discursive positions follows the logic of “no necessary (non-)correspondence” (Hall, 1985) between elements of the social totality as outlined in Chapter 2, which makes it necessary to study how these subject positions are established (and what meanings are acquired by them) in the particular case at hand. What this also implies is that the separate subject positions discussed here should not be imagined as pertaining to any particular respondent and vice versa there is always potentially more than one subject position that someone can occupy. Describing one’s subject position in terms structured but not defined by a discourse, that is, giving an account of oneself “that one performs for, to, even *on* an other, an allocutory deed, an acting for, and in the face of, the other and sometimes by virtue of the language provided by the other” (Butler, 2005: 130), performatively creates the self. Researching these performances of specific subject positions can help us investigate their articulated, and thus not necessary, link to the ideologies that make them intelligible. Understanding these links is an important step towards their rearticulation.

My respondents have tested their accounts, created for me, on me in the interview situation – and some of them, including myself, expressly felt that these very often “constitute[d] a linguistic and social occasion for self-transformation” (Butler, 2005: 130) both for the person giving and for the listener “who ‘receives’ the account through one set of norms or another” (Butler, 2005: 131). I offer this text to be treated the same way; not as a representation of particular respondents or subject positions, to give them voice or for any other reason – they have not asked me for that and, as academics, they are mostly capable of doing that themselves. I will inevitably represent “them” in a certain way in the process but I do so with the intention of offering ideas and asking questions that may lead to considerations resulting in self-transformation – certainly for me as I write but hopefully also for my readers. It is then another aim of this chapter to contemplate what I can do, what subject positions are available to speak from (for me).

“I’m huungryyy...”

The articulation of a critical management school extends well beyond this text into family life – quickly finding some biscuits to satisfy named hunger or leaving this text aside²² to cook something healthy and tasty and “lose” another hour²³ – as so many of my respondents, matter-of-factly and critically, have told me during our discussions. As Aidan remarked comparing FUSO to other places of work, “That’s completely different here [...] If I meet somebody in the café, majority of the conversation, half the conversation would be about personal life and the other half about work, and that would blur as well, where those lines are exactly” (Aidan). Such an investigation of certain constraints on subject positions to emerge is a basic ethical responsibility we need to fulfil in the face of the other. Foucault, in Butler’s words (2005: 109),

maintains that ethics can only be understood in terms of a process of critique, where critique attends, among other things, to the regimes of intelligibility that order ontology and, specifically, the ontology of the subject. When Foucault asks the question “What, given the contemporary regime of being, can I be?” he locates the possibility of subject formation in a historically instituted order of ontology maintained through coercive effects.

Discussing matters of family commitments has been an ongoing part of critically investigating the question of what any “I” of my respondents and others “can be” in a critically-oriented business and management school. Such a turn to the power of discourse that structures social relations in this case is both an ethical necessity and a statement about politics, which necessitate a critique of the status quo (cf. Butler, 2005: 124). There have been numerous calls for reflexivity in critical management research: Fournier and Grey (2000) highlighted it as one of the three foundational bases on which CMS rests, its importance has been emphasized for doing research (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009), for ethical conduct (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008), for practice (Cunliffe, 2004), for management education (Reynolds, 1999), and for being a CMS scholar (Tatli, 2012) amongst many others.

Given this attention paid to being reflexive and the voiced and implicit requirement of critically examining one’s own practices and circumstances, it is not surprising to find as one particularly salient subject position that of the internal critic. I turn to this subject position, a collection of different kinds of internal critical voices, in the next section. Then I discuss questions of gender, an issue that clearly emerged from my research but then was puzzlingly discussed in some interviews as a not problematic enough for consideration. The

²² In all fairness, our daughter can and does ask for food in a nicer way; just that the realization of her condition usually takes verbal precedence. We are all engaged in impression management.

²³ And if you’ve been tricked by the footnotes into re-reading this sentence for a second or especially third time by now, you are certainly closer to understanding what I’m talking about.

third subject position is that of the outsider, who consciously or not happens not to be closely associated with the critical orientation of, especially, FUSO. Finally, I turn briefly to the enthusiast, who considers critically-oriented schools the best possible workplaces.

5.1. Internal critics and the rules of (critical) management

Internal critics are dissatisfied with one or more aspects of their School and/or working in higher education, given the often intertwined nature of these two areas (see Chapter 4). But as I have tried to emphasize earlier, this is not the only way they think about the School when it comes to other aspects. James, for instance, has been at the School for over 10 years and like most internal critics after a point in our discussion he looks back at what he had talked about and quickly adds: “Don’t get me wrong, it’s not that I’m unhappy with the School [...] most places would be worse, where I used to work” (James).

The intensification of academic work discussed in Chapter 4 is a prominent feature of the critics’ narratives who believe in CMS. “If there’s one thing that’s changed a lot over the last ten years, it is the demands on time” (Joshua). Reminiscing over the last decade, Joshua tells me that about a period before the School has grown tremendously from less than 10 staff members to over 110 in about 15 years:

reading groups were a staple aspect of the School’s activities; as were the seminar series, a fundamental – you could call it – ritual. People used to knock on people’s doors ten minutes before that the seminar was starting and “what the hell are you doing in your office.” [...] it was packed every single week. [...] And there was a real sense of the scholarly community [...] If there’s one thing that has been lost over the last decade, it’s that [scholarly community]. Now that’s not to say that the people, the great people are not here. Indeed, you could argue that there’s more of them here now than there ever has been. But that culture of coming together to have arguments and to really take ideas and debate seriously – that effectively is a myth. (Joshua)

Such a closely-knit scholarly community is hardly sustainable with over a hundred people and given the changes in academic labour described in the previous chapter. With the change in circumstances and the composition of FUSO, for a type of the internal critic, the “*real* sense of scholarly community” has faded and been taken over by a *myth*. In Barthes’ (1972) famous analysis, a myth is a form of depoliticized speech that subsumes the historical specificity of language and signs to the idea of its representing a natural universal way things are. “Scholarly community” as a myth can be understood as ideologically masking the historical specificity of the term over different periods. Such a community is not naturally given in an academic context but it is precisely sustained by the practices, and rituals, of

academic citizens. Managing academics' time for activities and toward outputs that are deemed institutionally useful hinders their ability to engage in activities that otherwise weave the managerially unrecognized and unpaid fabric of academia – in the form of research seminars, discussions over coffee, peer review, external examining, etc.

Now I think that part of the reason for that has to do with work intensification rather than anything to do with ideological drift, or anything to do with pedagogical drift. I think a large part of this is that people do not have the time or if they have the time, they don't have the inclination to devote themselves to what is effectively extracurricular. And if you think about it, you know what I mean, coming to the seminar and coming to reading groups, you're not getting publications out of it, you're not getting stuff out of it, you know, you're not getting any of this sort of performance measures out of it, so you know many people would make the decisions for doing their job rather than getting involved with anything. Whereas a decade ago this was seen as doing our jobs... A decade ago? Half a decade ago arguably! (Joshua)

Such intensification in terms of academic output, because that is what performance normally means, produces the feeling of not being able to keep up with current research or only very selectively. Furthermore, articles are often not worthy of attention since they don't add too much new. Academics have to publish or perish, which leads to slicing up their research into several, often quite repetitive articles – into what in academic slang is called the “Least Publishable Unit” (Broad and Wade, 1982) or “salami publication” (Elsevier, 2015).

The academic environment I experience in institutions that I'm in, I don't know whether it's just that I'm old and slightly narrow-minded, it's just that I kinda think there are few clever really and it's not that illuminating to me so there's a lot of repetition, lot of... There's too much stuff, too much writing, and it kind of feels that the stuff in there that's worthy of attention is not a lot. And I don't want to be going round making any judgements because it seems one has to be engaged and it's quite hard work, conferences, this, that, the other. [...] There's just too much. (James)

The need to write and publish, as the basis of performance evaluation in contemporary UK academia, does not leave CMS intact either. With its becoming increasingly institutionalized and accepted, CMS is portrayed as a viable strategic route to having publications.

I think the main problem for CMS is that it's become...well, I'll just say it and if it sounds stupid, I'll revise it...it's become a publication strategy. There are identifiable CMS journals, identifiable CMS publishers, identifiable CMS concepts, concerns, debates and so on. And you know, I'm not against that in principle but there has been more to it than that and I'm not so sure that there is. So I think the real failure is not so much that it's become a publishing strategy but it's become a publication strategy as if that were an end in itself. (Joshua)

The institutionalization of CMS as described in the quotation has led to its recognition as a legitimate mode of inquiry in management research. With CMS becoming recognized and recognizable for initially “external” audiences, the borders incumbents may

feel had been in place begin to loosen up – it can change what counts as CMS, who and where can do CMS, and how it is done. Like a subculture, once its boundaries are set, boundary-work begins, and it becomes imaginable for these boundaries to be challenged. The insiders will likely understand any such challenge as a threat that would dilute or divert the alleged core.

Membership in the core of CMS is clearly established in these interviews. As Joshua remarks, “And for the last 10 years I have known nothing but CMS”. And when I ask James about FUSO’s social science based approach to teaching management, he responds: “How do I relate to it? It’s normal. [...] I don’t know what the alternative is. What’s the alternative? Is it teaching people to earn more money by whatever they do? I don’t really understand what a non-critical approach to this kind of sociology-based system would be”. A few minutes later it becomes clear though that he knows what the alternative is but has never sought to engage with it: “I don’t know the functionalist people”, and after a long pause he turns to me, “Have you met one? In Britain?” (James). I respond something jokingly about spotting a few of them in suits and ties in other business schools while he marvels at titles on organizational behaviour and introduction to management on his bookcase. “I’ve never met them, and they exist somewhere”. The functionalist becomes a haunting mythical character, the other who serves as the constitutive outside to who we are and what we do but also as a threat: “They exist, and one day they’re gonna come and bang on the wall, and I’m not gonna like that very much. It could be next year!” I have discussed the threat of critically-oriented schools changing their institutionally favoured approach quickly after the arrival of a Dean or Head who prefers “traditional” business schools. The end of the tenure of the current Head of School “next year” however furthers this here. During 2014, there were various discussions about what who the successor could be but the more pressing issue of the appointment and arrival of the new Vice-Chancellor and the REF results have put this aside. At the end of the year, however, the issue surfaced again and it was generating a serious amount of anxiety about the future.

It appears as if there were potentially pressures on CMS and critically-oriented teaching from both above, with the selection of the new Head of School, as well as horizontally in terms of academic peers moving into the field. Joshua bitterly remarks,

I don’t want to say that it’s completely pointless to have a publication driven idea of CMS but I can see inroads armies. There is now a legitimate avenue for publication for scholars who otherwise would not have one. I’m not against that – but if we try to do something more than that, it seems very difficult. (Joshua)

For the internal critic, the changes in the acceptance of CMS and its institutionalization, which can be viewed in a rather positive light too,²⁴ is a negative development. The need to publish in the contemporary academic environment and with US journal editors playing up their outlets by including some “colourful” non-positivist articles is articulated together with the institutionalization of CMS. At one level what sustains this coupling is the power of the context over individuals and their practices, what precisely keeps them individualized. In the hegemonic system of neoliberal academia, barricades are hard to erect and defend, especially while “inroads armies” are continually invited to march into the critical business school as we have seen in the previous chapter. Business growth is an unquestionable constant in management higher education that no barricade would stop and it brings into the business school both people who can satisfy market demand for particular (mostly finance-related) programmes and who may consider CMS just one of several approaches to management research and education that they sometimes choose.

For Joshua this serves as redemption and it helps alleviate some ethical issues within the community. The “degree of mission drift” that FUSO’s growth “has unintentionally brought with it” is presented as a natural process provided that “it must just happen that as things start to get bigger they also start to loosen up in terms of focus” (Joshua). It is far from good but he sees it as a force of the times that cannot be combatted, or rather that shift the terrain of CMS in general and FUSO in particular. The framework is set by the more powerful “hostile reviewers and editors and the hostile institutional, political framework which doesn’t want to see radical or even left-of-centre ideas becoming our sort of foundation of what happens in business and management schools” (Joshua). University managers are part of this framework and they now require efficiency: “You can’t point towards ‘oh, there’s a working group and yeah, yeah’”, adds Joshua laughing, “they don’t give a shit”. Hence, the only remaining option is to speak (back) to them in a language they understand, that of the market, demand and strategic positioning, thereby giving “a neoliberal response to a neoliberal problem” (Joshua).

Such a response includes: introducing programmes and hiring people in accounting and finance, thus transforming CMS into a niche interest strand among many others in the School; accepting the performance metrics imposed on academics; leaving the question of growth off the table; and indeed thinking of social science based management studies as a USP for students. The terrain has clearly shifted and now “it’s possible for a managerial

²⁴ For instance, Grey and Willmott (2005: 12) write, “It is only by institutionalizing CMS, not just inside business schools but within journals, funding bodies and other forums that its shallow roots can go deeper, with an improved prospect of changing the theory and practice of management”.

sleight of hand to get rid of CMS or a critical idea of management education”, which changes what politics and ethics mean. Not surprisingly, being one strand was seen as less of a problem for my respondents at both MUSO and WUSO given that they have always functioned as part of larger schools with mixed approaches. The critical group at WUSO specifically was encouraged by increasing what is on the palette of the whole school. Reflecting on this Joshua remarks, “a few years ago I would’ve probably beaten myself up for even thinking that marketing [and using the language of demand] was a fight or political activity”. Political realism that secures a space to exist here defines the ethics of action and overrides bolder requests that CMS could demand in order to sustain the articulation of a critically-oriented business school. This is a kind of *realpolitik* which, in a mirrored Bismarckian fashion, using relatively small adaptive changes at the three schools strives to pre-empt larger, more disruptive changes by the institutionally more powerful.

Due to these “others” making their inroads into FUSO, it wouldn’t be difficult “to get rid of CMS” because “to some extent it’s already being diluted” (Joshua). The dilution is represented by people who think of CMS as “only” one of many possible approaches. For instance, as Sophie says, “you have a research question and you look for an appropriate theory to how to look into it. [...] For me it’s a horses for courses thing, and either I find a theory useful and I can relate to it on some level or I don’t”. It does not require scholars signing up for CMS to study management critically, “let’s not give them the monopoly on criticality” (Amelia). Several of my respondents have expressed their view that good social science is always “from a critical, sceptical, non-mainstream, non-corporate point of view” (Sophie).

What I do does not, in terms of content, does not fit with CMS. But at the same time I have always been quite curious or rather suspicious with regard to what criticality stands for in critical management studies. And if it stands for or it could stand for using French philosophers [...] in the 1970s to 80s, popularized incidentally by American literary criticism rather than...then I don’t do that. If we treat it as a general caution that looks at..., that says things are not what they seem, then most of the social sciences is about that. (Amelia)

Part of the reason for this difference in approach may be the different education people outside the UK receive when it comes to doing social sciences. The boundaries of what counts as “mainstream” and “critical” shows a general difference between the UK and the continental educational systems. As Amelia reflects on it, “for me, you know, it was part of my extremely mainstream education” (Amelia).

As a result, Joshua mourns the now lost past of CMS being the cement of FUSO:

There's certainly still a stronghold of it but it's a niche interest here in the way that Islamic finance is a niche interest here or, well, labour market studies is a niche interest here, or macromarketing is – it's one strand amongst many others. [...] It's been neatly domesticated, I think. (Joshua)

Institutional narratives often rely on such a trope of a golden era. Those times when things were better as opposed to the present, or present things working better in contrast with a grim future. This recent past is still a lived experience for many at FUSO and not just a mythical past, though as we can see, it is coming to achieve a similar status. It is also a matter of rituals performed to sustain that “more real” present as a non-myth for the participants. But non-participants, meaning both newcomers and members of FUSO who were not participating in the performance of those rituals (while they may also think negatively about the current scholarly community) will evaluate the present as real and the past as a myth. Rituals in this case sustain a myth of *realness*. As the rituals of the past lose some of their prevalence, it is this realness of the myth that fades, it becomes recognized as myth. At the same time, it becomes a ritual to reminisce about the golden past now lost, thereby constructing it as a myth. This separation sets up the stage for critique.

Reflecting on this problem, other “internal critics” have proposed a closer focus on mitigating or changing these circumstances at least internally, and on finding an adequate response to the erosion of academic community. Changes in the wider context of academic life in the UK, I believe, do not relieve one from being personally and collectively ethically responsible for (not combatting) these changes (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014). So while the first position, as explained so far, considers CMS already “diluted” and hence assumes that whatever is left of it is good, this second position of the internal critic assumes that things may very quickly get much worse in the near future but staff members should still be critical of their own actions and practices until this happens (and they should always have been). Not that much could be done individually. Although, James does not think this is due to changes in higher education environment as “it would always be a mess”. Rather the expansion of FUSO created a certain “hypocrisy [given] the high salaries that they pay to senior staff, their conference budgets” which are not in line with the School's alleged ethos. “So I think the teaching apart we don't live up to it – the way we behave, the way we run the department, the way we think of ourselves, the way we interact with externals, parts of the university, where we think ourselves different” (James).

Others have echoed a similar criticism of practices, but one based not on being arguably true to values of CMS but rather building on logics of general management. As we have seen before, while those who expressed a strong commitment to CMS often regard

others as outsiders, when asked about it, these alleged outsiders do not necessarily feel the same way. For instance, halfway through our interview, I unconsciously attempted to frame Amelia as an outsider by asking, “Have you ever felt that projects which were more in line with CMS than yours are more accepted [at FUSO]?” Her answer was an immediate and categorical “no” – largely because acceptance is achieved in the scholarly community through conferences, publications, and grants. Staff members who don’t want to be explicitly affiliated with CMS rather think of themselves and their position as being more pluralistic, adopting a more general point of view, and being able to find particular theories that can respond to a particular theoretical or practical problem. But then she is quick to affirm that not feeling like an outsider does not mean not being critical of FUSO:

Sorry that’s probably jumping about but this is something that needs to be said. So before I forget – it’s that I find the way things are in the School somewhat at odds with critical management is the actual running of the School. As in, you know, approaches of organizing, coordinating, managing, and administering. [...] So partly invariably I do find it somewhat... I’m searching for a kind word... somewhat haphazard. I find that the critical approach to management seems to translate within the context of managing the School to certain disregard of the rules of management. (Amelia)

The position expressed here is built on a belief in certain achievements of management science rather than its value basis, or indeed that of CMS. It may be a result of such an approach and the perspective it usually entails that Amelia attributes shortcomings in terms of practices to the senior management of the School. Practices that James decries as predicated on “the protection of management they would [otherwise resent]”, Amelia attributes to not taking management seriously enough. The problem is either with espoused values making people hypocritical, or an “interesting contradiction” regarding CMS-adherents’ reflexivity. The contradiction may be partly unconscious and unknowingly selective about the social and management theories they (choose to) accept as true.

Possibly some of it happens without them being fully cognizant. And otherwise it probably happens because, you know, that’s in their interest [...] That’s the way it is, it’s just a pragmatic way of doing things. Again, I don’t blame them. Even though I’m not a CMS person, yes, at a CMS school, I would say ‘well, that’s only natural’ because they shouldn’t think they ought to escape the same forces that are described in any area of decision making. They would not immune [...] themselves from, I don’t know, the iron laws of oligarchy because they know that. (Amelia)

Examples of such “failing” practices include: the general staff meeting which from “self-democracy” has “degenerate[d] into something different” (Amelia) to the point of several staff members giving up on attending these meetings in their frustration that most topics cannot be discussed in adequate detail. FUSO’s recent restructuring has been quoted as an example of authoritative decision-making.

	Practical	Theoretical
Us	Critiques the everyday running and functioning of our own workplace	Critiques the digression towards pluralism
Them	Critiques the attempt to overcome allegedly universal laws and attitudes	Critiques critical (management) scholarship as such

Table 5.1 Internal critic positions

This section has introduced the subject position of the internal critic, through which several distinctions can be made (Table 5.1). First, staff members often refer to CMS as “us” and “them”, include or exclude themselves from the group. Second, their critique is concerned largely either with research and CMS as an academic field, or with academic practice and CMS as a source of values to do things differently. While like most of my respondents I would also consider the theory-practice division rather problematic, many of them have alluded to it by talking about “doing theory” and application, engagement, and impact. Articulation of a critically-oriented school of business and management still brings these people together and smooths out these differences for the outsider. In terms of meanings, a critically-oriented school for the “theoretical us” would be an intellectual home where scholarship and free thinking, in the sense of academic freedom, is taken seriously and any digression toward more pluralistic positions would be seen as a Trojan horse already inside the walls. Masquerade, infiltration, and slow decay are the outlook here. The “practical us” rather focuses on how criticality in FUSO, in terms of its everyday running and functioning, has never been perfectly in line with “our” values and envisages an open attack of intruders in the future. The meaning of the School here would be to think of a society radically different to the existing one and model it in “our” own immediate environment. However, functionalists’ attack can easily dismantle the place largely because “we” have never completely lived up to our ideals.

The “practical them” position flags this ethical problem too but, not being invested in CMS to the same extent, also questions whether it is logical at all to expect “them” to possess the knowledge and the will to be better able to live up to any such position than non-CMS people. A critically-oriented business and management school here means a community in which one can still be freer from the constraint of serving managers and corporations than at most other places. Finally, the “theoretical them” position – logically very rarely expressed in a critical school – largely implies dissatisfaction and/or disagreement with what CMS in particular and critical social theory in general has become and where it is headed in terms of research concerns. When staff members adopt this position, they would like to see FUSO re-align its core meaning with something lost or feel that CMS has become a label they would not like to use when describing themselves.

5.2. Women, working for free

What follows is the story of the less than two hours of semi-public presentation of care for issues of gender following the “Postergate scandal”, which shook FUSO in 2013. My recital of the story is mostly based on the quickly unfolding email thread of the event, and it should allow me to draw out some conclusions on the gendered nature of academic life as well as differences in public and private portrayal of criticality.

On a Tuesday in 2013 at 8:33AM, everyone received the following email from Jessica, a staff member at FUSO:

Dear Comrades,

As some of you may know, November 7th is Equal Pay Day in the UK, this is the day in the year which because of the gender pay gap in the UK women work (in comparison to men) for free, for the remainder of the year. As a critical management school we should be fundamentally opposed to inequality. As such, on Sunday I decided to disseminate information about this issue to colleagues via a poster campaign. Early on Monday morning (circa 9am) the posters were removed and disposed of without discussion or consultation. I’m dismayed that this discussion was curtailed before it even began. As a consequence I attach a few photos, as they are now the only evidence that remain that this poster campaign ever happened. [...] It would be useful to know who ordered the removal of these posters, because I was under the impression that as a critical management school [we should discuss such issues].

Especially in light of the previous section on internal critics, it is interesting to note how she addresses everyone in “a critical management school” as “comrades”. I can’t recall any other email using such a salutation over the course of my research. This may be a strategic use of the expression to be reserved for use when colleagues at FUSO need to be reminded

of supposedly shared values and the struggle for gender equality. The reminder works if we can judge by the number of emails and discussions on official and unofficial forums. Samuel even goes as far as to ponder who an office door belongs to and whether removing anything from there, “note from a colleague about coffee, a draft document from me to a specific student, or even an obscene gesture on a postcard from a Spurs supporter” as well as a poster about gender equality is “petty theft”.

When a cynical pun about the lack of potential for debate reframes the question as one of censorship, Jessica is quick to ask “Who would want to censor a debate as important as pay inequality?” At this point, the general assumption still seems to be that it is someone from inside FUSO who ordered the removal and that the point in any case was a deliberate attempt at curtailing debate. Nevertheless, not a completely successful one as some posters are “alive and well in [the] corridor on the third floor” (Adam). In response, some call for open resistance: “I’d also like to suggest that *we* put the posters back up. Ironic that *they* left out a corridor which is not visible to folk passing through the building...” (Mia, emphases added). Others in a more concealed and harder-to-censor way: “How much of these debates are reflected in our syllabus other than a passing acknowledgement?” (Adam). Or with reference to bigger authorities in the eyes of outsiders: “Some of these issues could be addressed via our commitment to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education Initiative, as well as in other ways” (Tyler).

Someone finds a rather comical and presumably seldom enforced university “policy that anything which isn’t laminated gets taken down” (Mia) – even if only on one particular floor in the building of FUSO – which is quickly called a conspiracy theory. Having excavated this directive from under the dust of organizational memory, staff members’ natural insinuation rather was that someone higher up ordered this “blitzkrieg of un-laminated material removal” that “still whiffs of censorship” (Jessica). Someone for some reason, no doubt about this, certainly took the posters down. And indeed, it would be an appalling incident of gender-insensitive micromanagement to have these posters removed by higher order. At this point FUSO’s senior management chip in to affirm their non-involvement with the removal, and a counter-offensive is started with the demand: “And might the censor stand up and be counted please” (Samuel). It is still a startling assumption that someone would deliberately censor these posters on the main corridors. Especially so given that the University has excelled in women’s representation at more senior (professorial) levels for a number of years. (Much less so in terms of the wage gap.) Which is not to say that competition is not meek. “Excellence” is a rather relative notion and having 23% female

professors (Flatshire University publication, 2013) can be represented as much better than the 20.5% average in the UK. But the issue is much wider than what often gets publicly discussed regarding women shattering the glass ceiling on the Wall Street (Fisher 2012), concerning women's choice to be more assertive and thereby achieve more (Sandberg 2013), or regarding quotas in politics or on corporate boards (Engelstad and Teigen, 2012).

As Jessica comments, "it is an issue that effects more than just the professoriate staff. It has relevance to great number of people. [...] I'm away for a week now so am unable to re-poster the building, but more than happy to continue this debate, rather than pretending it doesn't exist". Continuing the debate, however, soon proves more difficult than anticipated at this point. At 10:15, an hour and forty-two minutes after the first message, the following email from a senior member of the School effectively kills the conversation:

However, at the risk of appearing to censor and given that [Mia] is trying to chase for further information [...]

Could we shift the conversation off the list (i.e. just send the messages directly around those contributing... and I'd quite like to continue to be in the conversation, if that's not too panoptical!)? This isn't because I don't think it's appropriate for the lists... rather it's the much more mundane issue that [the responsible administrator] has to authorise every post to the list and while it sustains the volume of traffic that it has thus far today that means she can't do anything else (and there's a couple of things that I really need her help on this morning!)

So please continue, continue to include me, indeed, if you wish, continue to include everyone... just please don't address it all to the list addresses! (Benjamin)

This is the last email in the thread – and newer ones about the letter to be sent to the relevant Flatshire University body for clarification always contain a remark along the lines of being sorry for "abusing the lists once more" (Mia). In the ensuing investigation, care is taken for the employees from Estates Services who are assumed to have acted on order from above (see Chapter 4 for a background to this belief). However, a few days later the responsible University senior manager has expressed his ignorance about the removal of the posters and positioned himself as a champion of free speech on campus. His subordinates at the Estates, though, said "that all posters and flyers are removed daily on [his] instruction, unless prior permission has been sought and the relevant material has the University logo on it and is professionally produced and displayed". The mystery has remained unresolved forever but the point here for me is not about establishing someone's ultimate responsibility for removing the posters. There are several other interesting elements in this story.

First, the motive behind putting the posters up probably was to spark debate or, at least, raise awareness about the issue of the pay gap among the users of the main building of the School. This would naturally signal that there is a perceived lack of understanding,

consideration, or discussion of these issues across the School. However, the fact that Jessica addresses everyone as “comrades” in the first email invokes a sense of unity, not division. The email thread shows a similar sentiment of care for gender equality. People who do not agree with the underlying problem, if there are any, would not join in the conversation. But when everyone agrees, there is hardly any “debate” to continue. Relatedly, this salutation turns the attempt to highlight differences and divisions in FUSO and in society into one to emphasize a shared ethos – both showing a powerful unity in the face of some internal or external threat and potentially appealing to the guilty consciousness of the wrongdoer.

Second, debate eventually ensues because of the removal of the posters and not because of having put them up. You might say that the “censor” did not give debate a chance but the lack of it became apparent after the re-postering of the building. There was a debate but not about gender. Censorship, conceptual or not, managed to draw attention away from the matter at hand and re-focus it onto the problem of censorship itself. To be more precise, an alleged public censorship provokes a public display of care for gender issues (by more than the one person who originally put up the posters). But this confines the discussion to establishing that gender inequality is an important problem without allowing for a more fundamental debate about the content of the problem.

Third, not only does gender equality not get to be discussed but eventually “private” censorship, which comes from inside the School, doesn’t either. As if people were “pretending it doesn’t exist.” The public portrayal of interest in and care for gender equality on the corridor, semi-public discussion on the list (including academic staff, administrative staff, and PhD students) is eventually policed by managing. It is confined from the relatively open space of an email list into the closed space of a debate group that never materialized – which is ironic if staff members really agree that the issue affects a wide range of people at FUSO and beyond. The unintentional opportunity that public censorship created to debate issues of gender was shut down by local (self-)censorship. Admitting to “the risk of appearing to censor,” as if doing it knowingly made it ethically right and gave authority to doing it, the argument for censorship focuses on the need for more information and the need for efficiency. The former would be irrelevant to a debate on gender, the latter tends to leave little time for considerations beyond its own logic. Having finished this paragraph, in a moment of semi-useful procrastination, I re-open the pictures I have from the morning in question (Figure 5.1). One of them is showing a black and white printed A4-size poster on a corridor door that reads, “Caution, women working for free in this area!” and next to it the “official” sign on a metallic plate screwed onto the door, “Fire door. Keep shut.”



**Figure 5.1 Women working for free poster
(used with permission)**

It does remain shut. Gender is not debated publicly, only *before* the public, and behind the shut door during my interviews I come across something utterly surprising. It probably has to do with my previous education in gender studies that I perceive this problem as a crucial one. At first it did not directly surface in my research but postergate and remarks by staff members at the other sites where I conducted interviews brought gender into my interest. Female participants in my research have recounted several instances where they indeed felt discriminated based on their gender. To start with confirming common knowledge, one of them who is actively concerned with the role of gender in academic practice agreed with me that women's representation at all levels in the University is appalling – and the higher up one looks, the worse it gets (Sophie). When I asked Amelia if she has ever felt that gender plays a role in her life at the School, she gave a very disturbing answer:

Um, well... it's taken me seven years to get a promotion in this institution. And I've got it only on the seventh try. I went five times internally and twice externally. Considering that I've had various good qualities that [were] good enough when the whole process started, I'm just wondering about what could contribute to it. I wouldn't necessarily attribute it directly to "let's just discriminate other people based on gender" but I would probably attribute it to the traditional things, like networks and house circles.

Even more disturbing for a self-declared critical community is the following remark trying to clarify my question: "If you are asking if it happens that I say something and then a male colleague repeats it later and everyone comments what a great idea it is? Yes, it does" (Olivia).

During the same interviews however I was surprised that the women and men I interviewed at FUSO, though they were cognizant of the issues related to gender, maintained that “there are more important issues than this” (Olivia). Although “we need to talk about gender in the School as well [...] probably there are other areas in the University that need more attention” (Sophie) partly because gender is not important “apart from higher up in the hierarchy” (Lily). I certainly accept that for my respondents gender is not as important an issue (or that its importance is downplayed) as some others related to the University, to restructuring, to administrative duties amongst others. It could be a positive feature that at non-professorial levels gender does not play an important role. But we have seen before that this is hardly the case. The lack of importance is interesting because it reflects neither a salient presence, nor an apparent absence of gender – but its somewhat conscious relegation to secondary status. It seems to me that some form of shutting of doors starts at a very personal level.

For instance, at a workshop on academic publishing in 2014 at FUSO, the presentations were given by three seasoned professors – all three white British men. I had heard rumours in the weeks leading up to the event criticizing the organizer for not having women in the line-up (and had not heard any concerning “race”). So possibly partly in response, he explained at the event that the women he asked had turned down the invitation and it was only after this that he thought of inviting the current people.²⁵ However, personal decisions to reject an invitation to such an event or relinquish the opportunity to speak out are embedded in a broader context – they are politically loaded. The shutting of gender doors at the personal level may be the result of patriarchal patterns in carework, cultural practices of appearing in public, embodied stereotypes, and so on. The connections with closeting are all too obvious here. Still, I am not aware of who had been invited and can only speculate why they did not come, but the failure of having women on the panel may have been part of a personal decision embedded in a wider social setting that critical scholars, as we have seen above, may be aware of but not find important enough to act on.

There is possibly another reason that research participants at MUSO and WUSO have brought to my attention. Namely, the institution itself, the history and reputation of FUSO. A few years ago it

²⁵ I was handpicked for this event as a member of the panel (consisting of a lecturer, an external Head of a business school, and me as a PhD student) to critically reflect on the happenings of the day. I made an attempt at offering my place to anyone else in the PhD community who would have liked to take it, especially if it were a woman. I now think I did too little and certainly too late.

had a reputation, you know, [it] was a sort of dragon den if you like. If you really wanted to see whether you had an argument or not, you'd go to [FUSO]. It was, you know, it was presented...it was a very exciting atmosphere as well. People got involved, it was very hard to chair, it was inspiring. (Joshua)

The “dragon den” may not be the most inviting place to settle down. Continuous debate, what for people in the School generally looks like a normal part of academic life, can appear confrontational to outsiders. Debate is “good” (Olivia), it is present in “everything I do” (Sophie) – only that sometimes it does not quite take place. The notion of critique as debate has also been closely tied to a particular person who eventually left FUSO several years ago. The “machismo” as image, however, has remained in the eyes of many external observers. And the departure of this particular colleague makes it relatively easy to bypass the gendered nature of the problem as only a reflection of the past (Harry, Aidan). But the ghost of past eras may still linger on, masking gendered differences, and shutting doors on various levels. While women are working for free.

5.3. Outsiders: a heterodox present?

The themes discussed in the previous section concerning gender can be generalized. Gender is just one, undoubtedly very important, characteristic along which power is distributed. And while it has not been my explicit goal in this research to identify what other traits and practices define power structures in FUSO, allow me to speculate about this in what follows.

Acker (2006: 443) defines

inequality in organizations as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations.

It seems to me that there are a variety of practices and processes beyond the usual intersection of gender, class and “race”/ethnicity that produce “inequality regimes” (Acker, 2006). Class did not surface in my research; maybe because I am not very attuned to its finer differences in the UK context. Doing more research with vice-chancellors earning over £250,000 per year and occupying a quasi-CEO position or with the mostly female administrative staff who provide the background for the running of the School, the case likely would have been very different. “Race” as an issue is largely non-existent in FUSO, and it would be interesting to know how this compares to other business schools in the UK. Ethnic differences, however, are very apparent with a huge number of academic staff

members coming from abroad. Even at school level there is a visible lack of their representation in decision-making positions – the Head and four Deputy Heads of FUSO were all British (at the time of my research). Whether the recent growth of FUSO will gradually change this pattern is to be seen; although it may well be that those “naturally” more suited for the job will be native speakers of English with cunning cultural understanding assuming that change at higher organizational levels is even less probable.

Many other characteristics could be listed here as relevant to the local inequality regime, which Acker (2006) describes as always changing and locally relevant. To get a taste of some of these, we shall go to the pub first. Reflecting on the good years when virtually the whole of FUSO was present at the weekly research seminars on Wednesdays, Joshua remarks, “So that was the thing. Then everyone would go out afterwards and the arguments would continue over dinner and over a few beers”. Going out and, often inadvertently, forging informal social relations in the pub that are subsequently transposed into formal settings is a fairly usual practice in organizations. Going to the pub is also a very typical pastime in the UK and this may have been a reason why its typically “blokeish” character, as Lucas described it at WUSO, was not discussed during my research by anyone at FUSO.²⁶ Part of the problem is that informal discussions and relationships cultivated over beers have allegedly led to decisions taken there, while this arrangement could result in the exclusion of mostly women, who do the majority of carework. Even if this is not factually true, myths about it in stories on the corridor show that it is part of the organizational reality – for some. Reflecting on the emergent organizational culture at the School, an influential senior member of staff has been referred to as someone who “loved his pint” (Alfie). If critical management is taken seriously, comments someone from WUSO, “such thing cannot happen at us because [a colleague] is Muslim and she doesn’t ever go to the pub” (Alfie).

My first night out in the UK after moving here happened to be in the company of 5-6 staff members and two second-year PhD students. As one beer followed another, and as a PhD student I was not allowed to pay for drinks, I got an introduction into departmental life that was much beyond any official Induction Day can offer. Discussions circled around politics, the hair of a senior lecturer recently dyed red, neoliberalism in academia, and the curious question of how it is technically possible for a band to write the title on their latest

²⁶ Later I’ve learnt that this practice was criticized at earlier times, which may have been the reason for not talking about it around 2014.

album cover across their drummer's erect penis.²⁷ This is speculative but there may be people who could and would want to go to the pub but would be deterred by such conversations.

Relatedly, FUSO staff who have known each other for decades (and potentially for this reason were higher in the School's hierarchy) used to form a team for the weekly pub quiz. This is a long-standing British custom, gradually making its way into other parts of the world too, in which understandably many of the questions are related to local politics, history, or music and so on. The need to be familiar with British events, people, and so on can facilitate self-selection among international staff. Even if someone is invited occasionally to join the team, knowing the regular time and place, having played together for years, and having a maximum of eight seats per table is going to limit the opportunities for inclusion.

Yet, these are certainly not impenetrable groups. To the contrary, they are generally rather welcoming *if* someone subscribes to their conduct and possesses qualities valued by the group, such as being aware of new trends and of local politics, being witty and/or insightful, or being able to do small talk. These are as equally important but less studied elements of maintaining inequality regimes as are class, "race" and gender, with which they are intertwined. As Amelia summarizes with reference to her failed attempts at promotion,

You know, if I made an active effort to go out and drink for half the evening, I might have the chance to getting to break into the circles. I don't think that I would necessarily be taken into confidence but probably it would increase, and probably it would contribute to whatever proof needs to be made according to whatever, you know, questions to justify [whether or not] to grant the promotion. But I would see it probably has to do more with the within and without, so the inclusion/exclusion from, again, these typically more visible forces.²⁸

Based on the factors of knowing each other from before and being at the School when it openly and unmistakably adopted a CMS-based perspective, having the shared knowledge of key CMS texts is a very core characteristic of ingroup (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) members. "So to some people here, I'm certain they don't know what CMS is. They certainly don't know what we would see as the key kind of texts of the area. And what's more, they don't care, you know" (Joshua). Outsiders are generally newer recruits who have joined FUSO in its growth stage, increasingly from outside the UK as for their education. They are probably closer to FUSO's self-description as having a "heterodox" orientation – a description that ingroup members use much less and that many of them see as a sell-out to

²⁷ For the intellectually inquisitive, it was the album No Love Deep Web by the experimental hip-hop group Death Grips. But before you search for it online, remember what you can expect to find.

²⁸ While who is put forward for promotion is decided at School level, final appointment decisions are made at university level. It is not the processual details, though, but the perception that matters in this case.

university managers and the idea of strategic positioning. In and outgroup are not stable categories but are precisely articulated performatively by the practices discussed in this section. As such, it is not so much movement between these groups, rather the continuous negotiation of the boundary itself that allows certain people to be recognized as its members.

But while it may be true that outsiders do not readily know the key CMS texts, I have not met a single one who would not care. So while they would admit something like “I don’t know enough about it to say I’m a CMS person” (Lily), this is usually complemented by a certain curiosity in order to be able to relate to the School’s historically core theoretical affiliation. Someone in finance and accounting explains that although the average student wants to know only about knowledge that can be readily used, she now also talks more about the wider, social implications of certain techniques and methods because “[FUSO] sort of pushes me culturally to do this” (Isla). In itself being in “some kind of middle position in the centre between being critical and being practical” (Sophie) may be problematic in the CMS tradition. “And I suppose there would be some more hardline academics who would then say ‘well, actually that engagement in itself is recognizing something that from a more critical point of view you would simply refuse, not deal with’” (Sophie).

Beyond the shared theoretical tradition between ingroup members, “breaking in” can also be challenging due to mundane historical reasons – a shared lived past. Several people across the School have known each other for long years and have had relationships that amount to more than just an odd meeting at a lecture or a conference. A recently appointed Reader had a former head as supervisor, and several ex-PhD students stayed on or came back shortly to work with their supervisors as lecturers. Another faculty member had the same former Head as external advisor for their PhD. James got a job at FUSO in the 1990s “when this was a small [distance learning-based] department” after finishing his PhD at a university in the UK where several current FUSO members used to work at the time. This was “before this ‘lot’, as I call [them], came” (James) and somewhat accidentally reunited with him. This collective migration in 2003-4 came both as the result of FUSO adopting a CMS-oriented perspective at that time (see Chapter 4) but also as the particular business school where they all worked took a harder stance on critical positions and started transforming it into a more closely managed institution. So the easiest way to become part of the ingroup, is to be already affiliated with someone in it, for instance, as research collaborators, co-editors, or supervisors. This is a moment when an “invisible college” of scholars in the field (Jones, Sharifi and Conway, 2006) is revealed through becoming a visible entity in the form of a school of business and management.

People's personal relationships evolve naturally and it is just normal that work relations lead to friendships and vice versa. Ultimately it is these staff members' historically organized network that produces a certain inequality regime at FUSO. Critical scholars may have an ethical imperative to open up these groups to members of the outgroup, to investigate the processes that construct them. This is difficult, though, because it requires that ingroup members give up some of their customary practices and identities. It also comes with a sense of dilution as group characteristics are rearranged. The immense speed at which FUSO was growing over the last five years contributed to such a reformation of group identity and practices. At the same time, it also contributed to the formation of new ingroups on the basis of more re-focused identities.

There is something else in the big migration story too; namely, the need to move on (see Section 6.3 for details). Moving around for promotions is a general feature of academic life in the UK but here it happens for the more specific reason of not finding a home so easily, maybe of being ousted from one's workplace possibly for being an ingroup member as a critical management scholar. So for instance, when feeling that his workplace may crumble under the weight of newly introduced managerialism at MUSO, Jack admits, "I'm looking for a new job". It is a fight that cannot be won (cf. Parker, 2014a), which leaves exit the only option once voicing one's concerns fails (Hirschman, 1970). This raises a conflicting ethical imperative with the previous one, the protection of ingroup members. Inasmuch as CMS is underprivileged in business and management studies, which is inarguably true, such informal practices of having gatekeepers can benefit researchers of the field. But if we postulate that CMS enjoys a hegemonic status at FUSO (in its full-blown theoretical counterhegemony), then reinforcement of this ingroup parallel to the continual and more versatile growth of the institution can be evaluated as practices that aim to reinforce precisely this (counter-)hegemonic status. Institutionalization here is about an attempt to create a counterhegemonic unity, which necessarily has to be based on exclusion – a topic I investigate further in Section 6.2.

5.4. Enthusiasts: a critical present?

For reasons discussed in Chapter 1, when I ended up at the School in October 2012, it really felt like arriving at a place that I had always dreamt of. And I am certainly not alone with having such a feeling. Aidan, a faculty member who left FUSO for a while, before eventually returning said that "it was like a homecoming to me" (Aidan). And from a distance, having

visited FUSO on some occasions while trying to find her place and fit in at various other institutions, “it seemed like Paradise” (Chloe) because the group of critically minded scholars is not a minority. Or as Aidan puts it, “There’s quite a lot less identity-work that I have to do here, which is really productive.” There is a certain feeling of being-at-home that some people have told me about claiming that before applying to a job advertisement, “I knew that I would look weird to most places whereas I didn’t look weird [here]” (Joshua). Someone presented it as a choice between FUSO or non-academic life: “I considered positions outside academia because I was not, I could not feel a part in mainstream management or business school like Warwick or Oxford or Cambridge, they wouldn’t have taken me there but I also wouldn’t be interested” (Sophie). Altogether, this feeling probably also contributes to the fact that “we’ve been able to retain so many of our own PhDs” (Emily).

FUSO has attained a fairly stable and generally respected status over the last approximately 15 years. It has been praised by University managers as well as outsiders for doing something different. It has also been mentioned in some publications as an exemplary institution in the UK committed to CMS (see Chapter 3) that openly supports critical approaches to studying organization and management (School website, 2013).

I think in various areas we are much further on, much more advanced than the traditional, mainstream marketing and management in general, I think. [...] But we’re by no means there yet. No, we’re not. We’ve still a long way to go, all the things I’ve talked about. I’m saying that we’re a little bit our way along the track but we surely have opened up where the track is and what we’re doing, so... But naturally, I’d say no-no, now it’s time for doing more labour. That would be the inroads into, into...while we get there. (Oscar)

The slip at the end of Oscar’s remarks is very interesting. He cannot quite formulate into what future state the School’s intellectual achievements have created inroads. Possibilities are opened up this way that otherwise would remain closed and this is good in itself if one doesn’t agree with the status quo – as is the case. In a way, my own project might actually symbolize this opening up by being opened up. Several people have told me that I’m lucky to have been allowed to embark on this research and that this couldn’t happen at their own institutions (which included places generally considered quite critical, like Goldsmiths). Allowing someone to track down certain paths about the institution could have been seen at various levels in the School (from my supervisors to the Head of School to interview participants) as a potential way to know more about what these inroads are and where they might lead.

According to many of the research participants, something similar is to be achieved with students (more on this in Chapter 7). If tutors can open up new roads for students to consider, it can again be praised for that:

[The School] has always delivered fairly good teaching. If we can do it that level, then I think students will go away knowing that they've had something like a very special encounter during their time at university. And I'm romantic about the idea that we can just reach it somehow. (Aidan)

Student feedback doesn't always confirm this "special encounter" (see Chapter 7) but there is a largely unanimous conviction that this is largely because of their being in their early twenties. Commonplace assumptions regarding business and management they arrive to the School with create expectations that are different to thinking about these fields the way they are discussed at the School. Embedding a similar consideration as best in its class into a wider social framework about the "class" in question, Joshua paints a perhaps more cynical but also more considerate picture.

Would I send any of my good friends, or family, or my own kids, would I say you know you should really study management and you should really study at [the School]? No, I wouldn't. If you want to study management, I mean, you know, yeah, do it [there]. But that's, you know, "if you want to study management" is the key part of that question. But once you've answered yes to that, then I would say, yes, [this School] is the place to do it. (Joshua)

Amidst the controversies experienced in the previous three subject positions, it should not be forgotten that there is a sort of celebratory position from which statements can be made too. The fact that those sections are much longer than this one, I believe, signals that the currently – and possibly always already – ongoing changes have bothered the research participants more than the importance they attribute to what has already been achieved.

5.5. Conclusion

Moving away from the unified picture of FUSO in interaction with other contexts presented in Chapter 4, in this chapter I showed some of the internal contradictions between members of the School that emerged in my research. The four subject positions described in this chapter do not correspond with particular individuals but are sets of prototypical resources that staff members draw on at certain times. Beyond the particular empirical situations that they are about, they highlight three issues that I will turn to in the next chapter.

The first one of these is the question whether critique can be institutionalized. The various positions of internal critics presented in this chapter show that critically-oriented schools of business and management are not closed to their own critique. In Chapter 6 I take up this argument and show at both a theoretical and empirical level that the institutionalization of critique is possible. Second, I connect this to a more generalized understanding of migration than presented in this chapter – one of not being at home. I argue that through understanding articulation as a process (Clifford, 2013), we could reconsider the contested articulations of the history of CMS as symptomatic of the institutionalization of critique through a variety of practices that continuously displace attempts at producing a fixed articulation of a critically-oriented school. Third, I develop the theme introduced here that contradictions are an important part of this institutionalization process. Based on this, in the last part of Chapter 6, I draw up a map of what critique means for my respondents, and argue that while rigour and relevance are separated from each other, this will necessarily result in the primacy of the former in the current contexts of academic life.

CHAPTER 6

“WE”:

ON THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CMS

In this chapter, I consider histories of CMS as an articulation that is being constantly re-written and contrast this with my respondents’ perceptions of what CMS does and what it ought to do. Through understanding articulation as a process, we could reconsider the contested articulations of the history of CMS as part of the middle ground struggles (Clifford, 2013) for institutional, and thus political, recognition. I argue that the political struggle embedded in the hegemonic CMS history is symptomatic of the practices through which critique can be institutionalized that continuously displace attempts at fixing the articulation of a critically-oriented school. In the last part of the chapter, I draw up a map of what critique means for my respondents keeping in line with the approach of contextuality (Grossberg, 2010). I argue that as long as rigour and relevance are separated from each other in our “ontological epoch” (Grossberg, 2013), this will necessarily result in the primacy of the former in the current contexts of academic life.

6.1. Genealogies of critical management studies

The main question for this chapter is the following. Can an academic field located inside the business school that calls itself critical, ever truly be so? And more broadly, can the alternative arise from within the instituted? It is seemingly paradoxical that an institution could be built on challenging the status quo. To be able to investigate this paradox and ask this question, I first briefly review some published accounts of the history of CMS to outline an “official” discourse. Official history has an important effect in instituted communities as it creates and

strengthens the network of actors and agreed core discourses. Having done that, I will be in the position to interrogate this history and outline how the rest of the chapter unfolds.

The story often goes like this. In 1992, the history of critical thought in management and organization studies is marked by the publication of Alvesson and Willmott's edited collection, *Critical Management Studies* (Alvesson, Bridgman and Willmott, 2009: 5; Grey and Willmott, 2005: 3; Parker, 2002: 117; Perriton and Singh, 2016: 80). This is an arbitrary point of origin, as antecedents include wider shifts in the social sciences from the 1960s towards more complex and conflict-based understandings of social realities, which slowly make themselves felt in university-based business schools, coupled with "older, humanistic critiques of bureaucracy and corporate capitalism" (Adler et al., 2007: 6). Some of these earlier developments include Burrell and Morgan's (1979) famous matrix about the prevalence of functionalist explanations of organization, which drew attention to the existence and potentials of a variety of other ways organisations and work can be understood as well. Wood and Kelly's (1978) article, prefiguratively titled "Towards a critical management science", presented an overview and critique of three pieces of writing that all opened up management ideas to resistance through broadly Marxist questions. In it, they raised questions that strongly resonate with some of the later problematics of CMS. Braverman's (1974) analysis of the labour process has also been an influential source of theorizing.

Let's also not forget that numerous sociologists found a new home in the expanding business schools in the UK where changes in governmental thinking about the practical purpose of higher education, mainly from the Thatcher-era onwards, have left sociology departments dwindling (Parker, 2015). As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, the growth of business schools and lucrative resources they enjoyed made it possible to cross-finance other, less marketable activities and departments of universities.²⁹ At the same time, it's also attracted a (financial) interest from social scientists who would otherwise have been left without a job. These scholars benefitted business schools in the then-introduced system of research exercises because most of them were reasonably good at writing highly valued academic texts (Grey and Willmott, 2005; Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011).

Besides the theoretical and job-related human components, formal institutions have been set up too, in the form of journals and conferences, that furthered the development of the field of CMS. The annual Labour Process Conference running since 1983 and the

²⁹ At FUSO, a note circulated in 2016 put this contribution at 53% of the School's income, along with 37% staff costs and 10% non-pay expenditures. The contribution has always been around 50% over the last years.

Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism (SCOS) since 1981 were the first to be set up. The two conferences have a strong attachment to more (neo-)Marxist and more poststructuralist forms of analysis and thinking, respectively, which despite the considerable overlap in interests, attitudes and topics has produced a continuing turf war in the UK. It is however more relevant for me to emphasize the important different but connected trajectories these conferences have played in the development of CMS (see Parker, 2015, for an explanation of the differences between them). It was in 1999 that the first International Critical Management Conference was organized in Manchester and it has been running with biannually ever since. The Critical Management Special Interest Group of the US Academy of Management was set up in 1998 to give some visibility to and represent scholars inside the largest organization of its kind.

Some journals mostly written for and by members of the CMS community have been successful in establishing an accepted voice (and getting on the journal lists too). *Culture and Organization* (founded in 1995) and *Organization* (1994) are closely related to SCOS and the CMS conference, respectively. Other journals like *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* (1990), *Gender, Work and Organization* (1994), *Human Relations* (1947), and *Organization Studies* (1980) are also receptive towards publications in CMS. Finally, a group of online journals in the field have rather opted for open access over dubious prestige achieved by maximizing journal impact factors, including *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* (2001), *Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry* (2001), *the Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory* (1995), and *M@n@gement* (1998).

This is very briefly the usual story presented about the institutionalization of CMS. The story can probably be told differently by alternative voices and more comprehensive versions of it can be found in Adler, Forbes and Willmott (2007), Spicer, Alvesson and Karreman (2009), and in Grey and Willmott (2005). Parker's two short accounts on critiques of CMS (2002) and the causes for differences between sociology of work and CMS (2015) are indicative of such alternative genealogies, for instance, claiming that the "crystallization of something called Critical Management Studies in the mid-1990s was unsurprising in [its] context" (Parker, 2015: 169). But my aim here is not to provide a different genealogy, although that could of course serve as a way to destabilize some of the power that a widely accepted narrative confers on the "church elders" (Burrell, 2009). Rather, I would like to consider what effects such (and any) history of institutionalization yield for the community. It is for this reason that the context of the business school in which the most common history of CMS and academics in the field are embedded becomes important.

From the 1960s sociology had gradually become a radical field of studies in the UK. Structural functionalism gave way to a sociology starting from the human experience of a socially constructed world. The drive to understand these constructions positioned sociology as “articulated in opposition to power, constraint and inauthenticity” (Parker, 2015: 166). Sociology of work aims at revealing how the present in truth is different to what you think, CMS aims at making you think the present differently (Parker, 2015). But both can be considered “critical” in the contextual sense of working against the dominant or the default in the business school. Parker argues that this happens because scholars of both sociology of work and CMS arrive to the business school from the outside and bring with them a mentality of handling (the) power(ful) with suspicion. In a business school that is increasingly concerned with not alienating its customers and labourers, a major threat is that such a shared sense of “being alien” might prove difficult to maintain. This, Parker maintains, often happens through gradual re-description, and we’ve seen examples of this in the previous chapter, of what still counts as acceptably critical or what it really is that one does. Thus, mismatches between one’s espoused beliefs, their actual practices and their institutional location result in what would be described as hypocrisy from the outside. But Parker argues that

critical work comes from an awareness of not being at home, and that suggests that any institution that congeals, and which begins to produce inhabitants who have never been anywhere else, is in danger of losing the possibility of critical understanding. What could you know of the business school, if it is only the business school that you know? (Parker, 2015: 177)

This is a compelling argument about the outsider seeing things better, noticing the strings faster and possibly with more precision than the insiders. As time passes and one finds (an intellectual) home, critique can wane as it also can with those who are born insiders.

There are a few questions though to be answered. First, how is simply being born into the world, which happens to all of us, different to this? As Parker notes, there is no outside from which the world and social institutions can be critiqued. Does that not mean that being always on the inside, critique is still possible? And that it is precisely made possible by “forms of Manichean thought”, by arbitrarily accepting (and being forced to accept in the case of minorities) or imposing certain differences in order to be able to claim the position of an outsider, of someone who has just arrived? Second, would this also mean that students, PhD students, and lecturers socialized within the critical business school would be able to produce more critical work if they moved to sociology, philosophy, or some other field? Or, which may in fact be a different question, how much of an outsider does one have to be to

do critical work? And if we contextualise where critique takes place saying that it necessarily has to happen against that institutional context, then can CMS scholars ever be at home in a business school? And in one that calls itself critical? And third, if we cannot be at home, then is critique a matter of “awareness” about how much we are not at home? Or is critique a mentality, for some people are very aware that they can never be “at home”?

6.2. The cleansed “we”

In this section, I argue that alternatives can arise from within. Institutionalization does more than what is described in Parker’s (2015) account. It produces a double effect that at once acts towards the weakening and strengthening of critique through the continuous re-making of borders. That is, an element of critique can be maintained precisely *because of* institutionalization. I will argue more broadly that establishing a CME school *is* potentially a way of becoming more or, rather, differently attached to those outside the business school, inasmuch as such a conception of inside and outside can be sustained at all. While for CMS its institutional location may be problematic, the very nature of CME makes its outside – often invoked as the “real world” – start within the business school. Building on the discussion in Chapter 4, I argue here that this can potentially turn the performative articulation of critically-oriented business and management schools into a form of “fearless speech” acts. At the same time, though, I argue in the second half of this section, the inside of the “we” of CMS may lose its focus on its arbitrarily established outside.

In their classic work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1991 [1966]) describe how habituation leads to institutionalization, that is a formalized way of repeating interactions when the original intentional agreement on particular practices is forgotten. As they argue, the habitual practice of a person transforms into the shared practice of a group (of at least two people), which in turn assumes a seeming objectivity over time with the disappearance of the people present at the originating moment as if it were only a routine expression of how things are done. In Berger and Luckmann’s words, “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (1991: 72). Any such routinized practice is built up and is continually reconstituted through a shared history and it exercises control over the actors “by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 72). Thus, over time alternative courses of action may fade and, as long as there is an adequate means of

legitimization for doing so, actors will be socialized into acting “spontaneously’ within the institutionally set channels” (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 80). Regarding the future of critique in the business school Parker argues that it is this institutional context of knowledge production that is likely to take the edge off critique, render it increasingly mild and accepting of the capitalist political economy in which it exists.

Nowadays, [the] migration of people and knowledge [into the business school] is increasingly forgotten within the place itself, as new PhDs are socialized within a “tradition” which they experience as substantially indigenous and handed down by professors who they only know as always having worked within this glittering new building (Parker, 2015: 163, see also Prasad, 2013).

Such an account of institutionalization, however, results in a paradox concerning critical practice. As if a tendency to simplify, routinize and naturalize interactions were struggling with a belief in and attitude of critiquing, denaturalizing, opening up alternatives.

Making and destabilizing boundaries

Indeed, Bridgman and Stephens (2008) argue that the way CMS has been institutionalized largely through its presence in university-based business schools, poses a problem. Namely, that most academics in business schools today do not anymore act as public intellectuals who would offer their critique of contemporary issues reaching a wide audience outside of academia. Bridgman and Stephens (2008) list three connected problems. First, an academic’s freedom of expression becomes limited to the field one researches, while “only” having a private opinion outside of that field. Second, academic freedom including critique is only protected by universities in this field of expertise where they are legally responsible to do so.³⁰ Third, consequently, individual academics’ responsibility for things happening outside of their research area is diminished as the university would not protect their freedom to speak regarding those issues, which therefore may hurt their careers.

This leads them to conclude that the institutional location of CMS in university business schools is a problem in itself, and that “strengthening [this] position [makes] CMS

³⁰ The boundaries here are clearly blurred. Having freedom to express critique inasmuch as fields are quite disperse could, for instance, cover “management” and “sociology” or “psychology”. Scholars’ skills in critique may be applied to contemporary issues outside their immediate area of expertise. However, how far off they can wander, whether comments on immigration, abortion, gay marriage, etc. are tolerated by their university is an usually unclear and always political question. Having dedicated “tone of voice” guides (Newey, 2015), even the message conveyed through how academics say things (e.g. tone or sighing) on or off-campus can become a matter of free speech (on the case of Thomas Docherty see Matthews, 2014).

[...] more professionalized and increasingly isolated from life outside the institution” (Bridgman and Stephens, 2008: 268).³¹ In response to these developments, they and others (Jack, 2004; Fournier and Smith, 2012) advocate *parrhesia*, a form of fearless speech practised by the ancient Kynics. Parrhesia is directed at the more privileged and more powerful (see Foucault, 2001), like CEOs, managers of the university, or “colleagues from the ‘mainstream’ of management”; briefly, “the ‘enemy’” (Bridgman and Stephens, 2008: 265).

Bridgman and Stephens argue that there are “limited opportunities to practice parrhesia through our teaching and research” (2008: 265). I want to suggest that those limits need to be explored in more detail. No boundary is neutral and pre-given, but it is precisely put in place retrospectively as a way of organizing social life (Cooper and Law, 1995). The division between the “real world” and the business school is created at the same time as the power this division yields, whereby the former gets privileged through the concept of relevance feeding into currently fashionable ideas of impact and employability. Examples of “real life” are brought into the classroom not in order to illuminate or transgress but to reinforce this separation. However, this attempt to divide carries in itself its own failure by emphasizing the connection, a mutual dependence on the other as a constitutive element in the relationship. This is not a connection between two fully formed social settings that interact as inside and outside. Rather each contains bits of the other; staff consult with NGOs, entrepreneurs regularly lecture to students (using the same tools of narration as any “inside” lecturer would but spiced with a perception of having been out there in the real world), some of them are members of a social movement campaigning for free higher education, others return to their studies after becoming disappointed with their corporate lives, students move fluently in between.

Two considerations are important in this regard. First, while critical management *studies* may be a problem because of its institutional location inside the neoliberal university, critical management *education* if practised in a business school, may arguably be considered a form of parrhesia against its very organizing conditions and the people acting in their name (see Chapter 7 for the difficulties associated with this as well as Burrell, 2009; Parker, 2004).

³¹ I think this argument is very important when it comes to the institutionalization of critique in the form of CMS but it is not without limitations. It romanticizes the past contemplating an era in which academics may have been more public intellectuals but the public they engaged with was much more limited in terms of class and cultural belonging as well as sheer number. Relatedly, with the widening of the public to be addressed, the nature of communication has also changed and in many ways become more democratic as to who can produce such critiques. There are a great number of blogs run by CMS scholars and many of them reach an audience, an admittedly limited and filtered one, through social media sites. These would certainly complicate Bridgman and Stephens’ (2008) analysis.

Second, if the distinction between the inside and the outside of the business school is untenable, then these students are actually (in) the “real world”. Much of CMS scholarship, and Bridgman and Stephens (2008) is not an exception, relies on this division to maintain a sense of urgency and likely to emphasize the political goal of changing the world (and not only academia). However, transferring students into the real world only after they graduate (and maybe even find a job) at the same time reinforces the political discourse of the separation that needs to be challenged.

The institutional location of CME in a business school positions it in a unique way to influence future workers, entrepreneurs and businesspeople as well as to challenge the current hegemony in management education. In this sense the institutionalization of CME, which is both part of and goes beyond the institutionalization of CMS, can be considered part of “the long march through the institutions”. This Gramsci-influenced phrase, coined by Rudi Dutschke (1980), refers to the politics of infiltrating key institutions in the current social order to prepare grounds for radical social change (the communist revolution in the Marxist tradition). Critical management schools then can help “to get people together, to build some kind of collective intellectual project” (Hall in Grossberg, 1986: 59).

Producing the orderly “we”

Institutionalization, though, as Hall remarks (Grossberg, 1986: 59), is not the same as codification. CMS, as Parker (2013) notes, could in theory become a political party that would require some form of codification, which comes with defining borders and excluding non-conforming members, setting a unified goal, devising a strategy for reaching it, and electing leaders to communicate this strategy. The recent formation of The International CMS Board (ICMSB) may, though, carry some elements of such a development. The intention to set up such a body was expressed by delegates at the 6th International CMS Conference at Warwick in July 2009, and consequently a call for nominations was circulated on a dedicated CMS jiscmail list on 20 April 2012.³² However, the list of nominees, instructions for voting, conditions of their election and service were never disclosed (or have miraculously disappeared from the archives of the email list).

This (un)democratically (self-)elected committee has been mentioned first in an email regarding tackling bigger issues – related to publishing in this case – dated 2 November

³²<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=CRITICAL-MANAGEMENT;a38c802e.1204> (Last accessed: 5 September 2016).

2012,³³ members of the committee have been announced by the main organizer of the 8th International CMS Conference in Manchester in July 2013, and then re-iterated in written form in the newsletter of the CMS Division of the Academy of Management in October 2014.³⁴ By September 2016, the ICMSB has a new website,³⁵ where its members can be found. Interestingly, the history section refers to “an online election”, without transparently accounting for the process, results, the terms of the office or how the *ex officio* members were appointed. To use Clifford’s insight loosely, CMS is a community that is currently in the process of reconfiguring itself, “drawing selectively on remembered pasts [as the list of ICMSB members attests]. The relevant question is whether, and how, [it] convince[s] and coerce[s] insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a ‘we’” (Clifford, 2001: 479).

The construction of such an autonomous “we”, as Pullen and Rhodes write (2008: 250) based on Douglas’ anthropological account of dirt, implies not only the policing of borders but also marking these out.

Systems of order and repetition (i.e. organizations) not only seek to expel the dirty and the messy so as to keep it contained, they must first create arbitrary conditions for dirt to be classified as such. And what does this mean for the creator of these systems? The image of the orderly, sanitized, sealed self? Identity not difference. Collection not dispersal. Containment and order, not leakiness and disorder.

Through its institutionalization – similarly to how mainstream management thought expels critical issues (see Dunne, Harney and Parker, 2008) – CMS has also produced a sort of unified “we”.

Reflecting on the tendency in critical management writing towards the collection of knowledge and the creation of an order of its own kind, to use Pullen and Rhodes’ expressions, in the early-2000s, Sinclair (in Grey and Sinclair, 2006: 448) discusses how CMS moved over only a few years from “being a motley band to an industry” of adapting always newer theorists. This resulted in a “collective psyche” that valued

toughness and difficulty – in agonizing for its own sake. [...] I have begun to characterize this psyche as sado-masochistic; propelled at some level by our pleasure in causing suffering (as writers) and pleasure in experiencing suffering (as readers). Eventually, we create a situation where we tacitly contribute to bondage not

³³<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=CRITICAL-MANAGEMENT;4384769d.1211> (Last accessed: 5 September 2016).

³⁴<http://cms.aom.org/wp-content/newsletters/PDF%20CMS%20Newsletter-Oct-2014.pdf>, p.4. (Last accessed: 5 September 2016)

³⁵See <https://internationalcms.org/>

emancipation, the very enslavement within an invisible regime that we so often argue passionately against. (Grey and Sinclair, 2006: 448)

Some aspects of what staff members who studied for their PhDs in a field akin to CMS or in critically-oriented schools resonates with this statement. Aidan explains that he is “really happy to have something like a common understanding of scholarship as something to do with reading difficult books, sharing our ideas about those difficult books”. Although he adds that “the almost inelastic way in which that [reading and discussion] was practiced [some years ago] was really unnecessary, and it was actually quite counterproductive” (Aidan). Joshua shares a similar sentiment regarding academic activities: “if I look back on my day and realise that I have spent more time answering emails than reading, then it is a wasted day”. Reading difficult texts can have a many purposes and outcomes. This includes, for instance, an adequately complex description of “reality” that potentially allows the author of the text to render this reality into textual form. Of course, it also helps in keeping one’s thinking sharp.

Combining Parker’s (2015) and Grey and Sinclair’s (2006) arguments, critique can become more diluted for such lecturers because they feel at home doing tough theory. Aidan’s attitude confirms the importance of suffering “for” theory as proper masochistic behaviour, the goal of which according to Deleuze’s *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989) is a certain expiatory exercise by seemingly relinquishing control of the situation, thereby infinitely delaying gratification. There is always the next difficult theory to understand. But the point is that the masochist is actually in full control of the events.³⁶ Grappling with difficult texts can then be understood as a way to controlled suffering – from never feeling fully comfortable with a certain theory, in order to maintain one’s criticality. Reading difficult texts in this sense becomes a substitute for other actions that can be infinitely delayed and their delay rationalized through suffering by other means. Self-inflicted suffering, that is. Critique might, however, precisely operate through such a sense of never settling, through remaining a constant “outsider” – and it is this question that I turn to in the next section.

6.3. Making a home where none exists

Parker (2013) argues with regards to future avenues for CMS that the “we” of CMS cannot be codified. He shows how each of the requirements of defining borders and excluding non-conforming members, setting a unified goal, devising a strategy, and electing leaders are

³⁶ I am grateful to Irina Cheresheva for sharing this reading with me.

respectively inapplicable in the case of CMS. Yet it may still be thought of as a broad-based social/political movement (Willmott, 2013). However, this is a social movement that, like many others, is unified only by its being constituted as external to the dominant neoliberal ideology. As Hall remarks,

it is not the case that the social forces, classes, groups, political movements, etc. are first constituted in their unity by objective economic conditions and then give rise to a unified ideology. The process is quite the reverse. One has to see the way in which a variety of different social groups enter into and constitute for a time a kind of political and social force, in part by seeing themselves reflected as a unified force in the ideology which constitutes them. (Grossberg, 1986: 55)

Nevertheless, being unified *in reflection* does not imply being merged in unity. Responses to the ideology in and by which CMS is constituted may be infusible – that is, both impossible to unify due to their diversity and suitable for infusion into this particular academic field or someone else’s thinking. CMS is more of an illusory label than reality, argues Parker (2013: 183), which as “a social movement [...] starts not to look like anything very much at all apart from a bunch of academics who won’t lay down their books but like the idea of being connected to social radicals”. CMS nevertheless appears to have a critique of unity coded not only into its name but also into its core force of formation. There may be a difference regarding knowledge production between the business school and a critically-oriented business school. As I will show in this section, migration and distancing still continues in FUSO. This is reinforced by keeping history alive, at least for now. In its double-faced nature institutionalization both takes the edge of critique and sustains it by creating a recitable history, a sort of accepted genealogy.

Migrations around the business school

If we look at the numbers, there are a variety of migrations taking place in and around the business school. This is a more general trend that might be attributed to the wealth of resources that the business school can offer. People from law to psychology as well as renegades of the business world may more easily find a job here than in other parts of the university. But more specifically at FUSO, there have been plenty of new arrivals as it’s grown through recent years. For several younger scholars getting a job at FUSO “was like homecoming” (Aidan) or it was the endpoint of a long journey to find an intellectual home (Chloe). Claims have also been made by members of staff for the CMS-related event “coming

home” (Mia) to FUSO and its being “the most unique [School of Organization] in the country” (Benjamin) by virtue of being home to great number of CMS people.

At the very same time, people are also not at home in many ways. Many of FUSO’s recent recruits have arrived from other departments including media studies, geography, physics, and psychology. At the level of PhD students this is even more so when they start. The future generation who might end up working in a business school, educated at FUSO as a context and having taught business and management modules, have backgrounds in philosophy, migration studies, history, and gender studies amongst others. Surely, this does not change the critical question of what happens if one is nurtured only in the business school, and I’ll get back to this later. But with both academic staff and doctoral candidates arriving from other fields, the sense of being out of place is likely not forgotten.

Many academic staff members are also not at home in terms of geography. As we have seen before, some of them have actually gone on a journey before arriving to their intellectual home. Which also means that they are not at home in terms of the social context they experience. Some FUSO members have come from Germany, Italy, Greece, and so on, while others from the UK have lived in other countries for extended periods. Arriving from other social contexts allows these scholars to approach social phenomena differently. They can reflect on the strangely familiar, such as political activism done differently across social contexts. They can embed regular topics in new contexts that they also know, as in the case of wine advertisements in China. Or it can help “locals” estrange the familiar by reflecting on those other contexts they have lived in. While moving from abroad may not be the only experience that can allow someone to engage with the kinds of topics listed here, it makes one more readily spot practices and institutions that are somehow strange.

The same applies to intellectual fields and approaches. The quite specific history of sociologists moving from their own department to the business school in the UK, has produced a standoff between industrial relations or sociology of work approaches and CMS. This disciplinary division can appear strange to someone arriving from a different intellectual tradition. “It looks like a playground fight” (Sophie), it is not that one is better than the other, that one is more adequately critical than the other. As Sophie claims, any good social science should be critical and being entrenched in these intellectual separations seems unnecessary to her. One has to choose the theory they use in light of their research question and whether it can help them answer that question or not. Even continental European thought, which is geographically rather close to the UK and is generally known, can result in a heightened awareness of not being at home, of not being implicated into these turf wars of UK scholars.

Home is where you don't have to lay your head

So far we have seen that migration inside the university can make one feel alien to the business school, moving between countries can make one aware of the particular contexts in which practices are embedded, whereas arriving from a different social science tradition can sensitize someone to the politics of claiming to be critical. But up to now I have conflated two, at least analytically separable, things. There is a difference in saying that one is not at home in the business school and that one is not at home at the schools in my study. Not being at home in the business school should spur critical analyses of business, management, and organization. Not being at home in a critically-oriented school would normally mean producing critique not only of the university-based business school but also of these critically-oriented schools' open and more informally accepted affiliation with CMS.

Traces of such a feeling of not being at home within CMS were scattered in several interviews. This can but does not necessarily have to mean being critical towards the particular school, like in the case of the subject position of the internal critic discussed in Chapter 5. It mostly means that the self-description of several research participants was not confined to this identity. Read pessimistically, when respondents tell me that "I wouldn't like to categorize myself as something" (Isaac), they may be making an effort to distance themselves from working in and belonging to the business school, which is "not home". More positively, it may be a symptom of a personal disposition of never being at home or possibly of never wanting to be at home, never wanting to settle – a conscious effort at not being pinned down intellectually. Amelia, for instance, told me, "I'm not sure I would attach any particular name to what I do" (Amelia).

Yet, most of my respondents did not hesitate to confirm that if they were introduced somewhere as a researcher or teacher who is active in the field of CMS, they would certainly not refuse the label. As Sophie argues, in this sense it really does not matter where one has arrived from to do work that can be associated with CMS. "[Labels] are not important for me for my individual identity, for looking into the mirror in the morning and say 'I am this'" (Sophie). What matters is that the personal histories are drawn together under the label of CMS. As she explains, "for the collective thing it is critical" to identify as CMS to sustain FUSO's "commitment to having a bird on a perch" (Sophie).

Institutionalization also allows people to find a home where they do not have to settle. As the process of institutionalization evolves through the continuous repetition of practices, rituals, and recognition of what has already been achieved, history is also retold

over and over again. It was indeed important at the founding of FUSO as it now exists, in the beginning of the 2000s, to be able to refer to CMS as a somewhat established field of inquiry that offered something of high academic value but different to the existing business school landscape in the UK. As Harry recounts, around that time, “majority [of staff members] were not research active but [FUSO] had huge amounts of cash because of what [the then Head] had done” (Harry). Given the late entrance of FUSO to the market of business schools (see Chapter 4), it received a mandate to recruit critical scholars from across the UK.

[S]o obviously we recruited from IROB (industrial relations and organizational behaviour) [at Warwick] where there was huge commitment and enrolment to a critical perspective but not within a school as a whole. So this seemed like an opportunity [...] we, and it *was* we, tried to pace out there the notion there was [a place] for those of a critical kind of orientation. And I think the university was somewhat sceptical but [...] straight away you could see that [...] the strategic placing of the school worked in terms of attracting some able academics. Because you could see these people were able academics. (Harry)

History, it appears, always already starts with a migration – both for the field in terms of academic knowledges and for FUSO in terms of the people who embody those. This aspect may well keep narratives of the institutional history known and alive. Locally this happens through the antagonism with the narratives favoured by University management and with (imaginary) mainstream business schools as I showed in Chapter 4. But more broadly, it matters just as much what kinds of histories of the field are recounted and what the place and role of critique is in these.

As this chapter should attest, critique of and in institutions is possible, although to a different extent at different times and places. Routine can never be fully legitimized (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). At the personal level, an individual can be understood as a set of habitualized actions; still, it is possible for someone to be critical of their own actions and beliefs. Similarly, an institution can also bring together individuals who may have the will, attitude or power to be critical of the institution itself. It can also be embedded into and facilitated by organizational design through, for instance, basic democratic decision-making, emergent processes, non-hierarchical structures, etc. Accounts of institutionalization usually discuss such a potential for critique, describing it in relation to social processes that sustain these institutions. Berger and Luckmann discuss the ongoing nature of institutionalization coupled with a recurrent necessity to legitimize the institution since there is no intrinsic logic to this process, any such appearance is only “superimposed” (1991: 82) on institutions by language.

Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) project is greatly concerned with the political goal of reactivating sedimented discourses to confront hegemonic interpretations. Being critical is crucial to their ideas; they

accept that the prospect of a rational harmony constitutes an ideal or "horizon" that should be pursued, but assert that without conflict and division pluralist democratic politics would be impossible, since any consensus is the result of hegemonic articulation which always has a constitutive outside that impedes its full realisation. (Bridgman, 2004: 46)

Critique, thus, is intrinsic to their theory since it is through expelling the constitutive outside that the inside, in this case business and management schools, become unified. Finally, Cooper and Law's (1995) discussion of the proximal view of organization as organizing is aimed at highlighting how institutions, distally understood as organizations, are actually mutually interpenetrated with what they try to exclude to create a certain stabilized unity on the inside. These three theoretical glimpses suggest that in order to maintain an inherently unstable "home", it is necessary that we continually reaffirm certain arbitrary boundaries through which ideas and people nevertheless migrate thereby critiquing the very borders we put in place.

But if its critique, or questioning, is in fact a constituent part of any institution, then the question becomes what holds them together, what makes them sustainable in a longer term. Several authors have noted the paradoxical nature of a critically-oriented school of business and management, and have concluded that such an institution should theoretically result in its own dissolution. Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) argue in general about CMS that its non-performative intent prevents it from engagement in activities that would actually change the world. Performativity in this context means when the "production of proof [...] falls under the control of another language game, in which the goal is no longer truth, but performativity – that is, the best possible input/output equation" (Lyotard, 1984: 46). In their highly influential article, Fournier and Grey (2000) claim that one of the founding values of CMS scholarship should be its commitment to being non-performative, and other scholars share this attitude (e.g. Dunne, Harney, Parker, et al., 2008). If this approach does not change, warn Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009: 538), then CMS, which "has achieved the status of an institution" by today, will remain cynical, dependent on performative management studies, hypocritical about what it does and, ultimately, it will not bring along the social change it promotes.

However, if it does, then Parker's (2002) vision of what may happen to business schools, like Damocles' sword, hangs above the heads of the academics currently engaged in

doing CMS. As he writes, “When the B-Schools become empty, when their corridors contain dead leaves and the roofs leak, then they will be converted into sociology departments or housing for the elderly, and CMS will have done its job” (Parker, 2002: 132). Although given the prevalence and ubiquity of management and the profit-motive today such a vision is far from the current reality, its manifestation would present business schools with two options. As Harney argues, one should understand, following Spivak, that critique in the business school “requires one to be able to call for the abolition of the discipline” (Harney in Dunne, Harney, Parker, et al., 2008: 286). Or, in order for the institution to remain legitimate, it has to radically alter the focus of its critique. This change may equally happen through a series of continuous challenges of what the institution stands for or a particular instance of fundamental reorientation – through challenging the status quo.

6.4. Types of critique

So far in this chapter I have argued that not only is critique possible in an institution, it is inherent to the process of “institutionalizing”. Consequently, as part of this process, critical management academics continuously interrogate – question and reaffirm – in their organizational practices the borders between the various contexts with which they come into interaction. In this section, I depict how this happens, what practices of critique are present at FUSO.

FUSO’s website in 2014 stated the following.

Unlike the approach taken within most mainstream western business schools, [our] critical approach to management challenges the status quo, rather than simply perpetuating it. Its research, which forms the basis for its teaching, contributes to fundamental management theory and serves as the basis for critical evaluations of contemporary management practices.

But if the “we” based on critique becomes, as it has with the growth of the school and the field, debated again, then questions may surface regarding what a “critical approach to management” actually means. In this section, I discuss a variety of positions regarding criticality amongst my research interviewees. I attempt to bracket, at least temporarily, notions of being *more* or *less* critical. Rather, I draw up a map of the kinds of critiques that exist at FUSO along a number of lines where they appear. Taking my cue from the quote above, I treat critique broadly to include any practice that “challenges the status quo”. The question in the last part of the chapter becomes, what articulation makes these forms of critique appear in this time and place.

It is interesting to see how critique is practiced in order to construct a range from more research-oriented practices to more activist ones. Note that in itself neither of these can be recounted as more or less critical positions – or actually both can be equally critical. The temporary and local privileging of either practice, or theory, though, can raise interesting questions about how we get from one theoretical/practical problem to another one in the same theoretical/practical register. This duality is also subtly present in the quotation from the website above: a “critical approach to management” is more aligned with the practical side as it can include both advising managers and doing management differently, while “critical evaluations of contemporary management practices” mentioned with regard to research, foregrounds a more theoretical criticism.

Joshua reflects on both in light of the changing nature of FUSO’s, certainly romanticized, commitment to CMS. In his opinion, CMS “is a niche interest here in the way that Islamic finance is a niche interest here or, well, labour market studies is a niche interest here, or macromarketing is – it’s one strand amongst many others. So it’s become...it’s not the [stress] that it was in Queen Mary because it’s one strand of many. It’s been neatly domesticated, I think. It’s alive and well as one strand among many others but in the day-to-day experience of this department it isn’t screamingly obvious that it’s a CMS school”. In Joshua’s evaluation CMS is still important but only as one cluster of research at FUSO, nor does it surface in organizational life ranging from questions around working practices to appointments and student recruitment. While practices of critique, as I show here, are naturally present at FUSO, these may not conform to (an idealized version) of what this should mean in CMS. As contexts change, and CMS changes being one of these contexts, criticality is also reshaped.

Critiques of managerial and organizational practice surface mostly in lived experiences. For instance, in the autumn of 2013, final teaching timetables were not released until we were already well into the academic year. We had to make do with weekly released changing schedules, partly because the central timetabling office was understaffed but ironically also due to a software failure when matters were taken into the own hands of FUSO and seemed to have been resolved. The situation put strain onto everyone who had to teach, and the five seminar tutors on a module I was also involved with did quite a lot of extra work to remedy the situation and create some order among students’ seminar groups and smaller assessment teams. However, instead of the usual assumption that this was part of the unspecified nature of the job academics have to do, the module leader saw to it that

each seminar leader was recognised and duly compensated (with book vouchers) for the extra work we had to do.

More formally, for instance, several staff members of FUSO are involved with the Women's Forum, Athena SWAN and other similar initiatives that try to isolate and address specifically gender-related problems that, mostly, women face in academia. Many of these difficulties are particularly salient at higher levels of the organization as Sophie also identifies: "I don't see this as a huge problem [at FUSO]. I've noticed that the senior staff tends to be male rather than female [...] That is completely [different] if you move to other committees, other levels of the University" (Sophie). It therefore needs a wider basis across the University and organizational roles and levels to address these issues emerging from the status quo.

Flatshire University can also fundamentally influence the life of the institution due to the power differential between them as we have already seen in Chapter 4. At times the power of the constitutive outside will be more repressive, at others more enabling for the institution. Since from the point of view of the university FUSO's legitimacy comes from its profitability and research prestige, if any of these are debated that may threaten the existence and criticality of the institution. However, when income and research output are right, the antagonism fades and not only does the university allow the critical management school to exist, but it may outright encourage it – legitimizing this action by relying on the concept of a unique selling point. In the following longer excerpt, Joshua explains that what counts as critical also changes in time in reaction to both local contexts and lived experiences elsewhere. At the interview, we discussed at length how Queen Mary's at the University of London attempted and for a few years sustained a business school that housed scholars from all kinds of disciplines, was in charge of its own recruitment and student selection, and then how it subsequently changed fundamentally – some would say, it collapsed – with the arrival of a new Dean and his policies in the name of efficiency. What Joshua talks about here is underscored by the intention to learn from the history of Queen Mary's and avoid a similar fate, while retaining some sense of criticality.

I'm increasingly coming to think that how we market the School can actually have a big impact on CMS and on seeing all sorts of things the School does. I'll give a concrete example. I do the open days. So what that involves is speaking to potential students and their parents about why they should come to [us]. Now within the open day presentation I...we make no bones about [FUSO] being a CMS school. I don't care if that's not true for the most part. It's my view of what the School is, or what the School in its better moments, should be about. So I present this notion of management education as interdisciplinary from recruitment terms to publication terms right through to pedagogical terms. So if you wanna come to [FUSO], the

reason you'd come [here] is because you're interested in this unique way of studying management. [We are] known specialized in this.

Now what that creates is two reactions – you know, it's a Marmite. You either love or you hate it, right? And yeah you can see that, again, at the end of this all. Now you know what the School is about you are gonna be in one of two positions. You either [think it's interesting] in which case you can be unafraid to come or you think it's weird and frightening in which case it's not – it's a major decision now rather than later. So that's not research, that's not teaching either, that's promotion, that's salesmanship. I think that there is a marketing group, and it's well accepted within the marketing group that this is our best line to go with. [...] It might end up being a neoliberal response to a neoliberal problem. But it's to say, OK, well if it's possible for a managerial sleight of hand to get rid of CMS or a critical idea of management education, what's the only way you can speak back to that? It's with the language of the market, it's with the language of demand. So if it's possible to present School managers the idea that we're doing CMS not because it's our own academic hobbyhorse but rather because this is a form of self-description, it's like a student intake-base, then that might actually be way of insulating us from the arbitrariness [...] So then you know I wouldn't call this activism, although it is a form of slamming...I don't think of it as activism but maybe it is potentially possible to think of it a little bit in the terms of activism. But it's using this sense that CMS is something worth having or something worth institutionalizing. And it's trying to store it up by seeing that as a segmentation prospect.

Joshua here challenges the status quo by re-appropriating the “neoliberal” language of business schools and universities more generally, for the critical project. This of course changes both. As Joshua bitterly remarks, “a few years ago I would've probably beaten myself up for even thinking that marketing was a fight or political activity” (Joshua). At the same time, though, this may be a strategy of mimicry (Bhabha, 1994) that challenges the power of the University management's mimed “market-oriented” discourse by revealing its performative nature. Mimicking the University's discourse might highlight that it is not the only and original point of departure when judgements about academic activities have to be made, but its power has to be continually reasserted through repetition. The assertion of an opposing discourse using the University management's one may create some ambivalence that could open space to some form of hybridity here. This is most likely not a way to dismantle the master's house (Lorde, 1984) but the re-appropriation of the master's tools might give rise to a continuous oppositional practice. In other words, it may be a way towards survival, towards the institutionalization of critique.

In contrast to the examples above, critical practice can be solitary too – done by someone without being oriented towards the community. James finds a space to be critical of the current academic context in his own practice.

If I didn't need to have x amounts of money, I could find other things to do with my time. I think that's not to say that I don't have some commitment to certain roles very reluctantly like lots of people do who work for a living. What I don't need is a

career progression or the recognition that comes with that from an institution because those are meaningless to me. And on the writing of research side, I think I understand the limits of my ability and if I professionally needed to establish myself I'd probably do it [...] I don't believe that everyone who works at an academic department even with a research focus, needs to be publishing research. (James)

Yet, this kind of critique is similar to being theoretically critical in one's research. If you look at it, James sets an example following through with his own ethical commitments that, as he told me in another part of the interview, stem from taking the principles of CMS seriously. At the same time, though, his commitment does not engage other community members at FUSO directly.

It's similar when it comes to doing research. The focus in the following examples is outside of FUSO, on some other aspect of, location and time period in, the world. For instance, Oscar discussing critical marketing tells me that there are all kinds of "big questions in marketing where mainstream marketing haven't got the answers or don't even ask the questions – and we do" (Oscar). It has been possible to change marketing thinking, disturb the currently accepted ideas and models, or at least highlight their limits, in the following areas, for instance.

The role of consumption and the consumer in the organization and the workplace. [...] We clearly impacted the kind of view of marketing management or marketing managers too. Because the traditional mainstream marketing view of what a marketing manager does, what he should do, is functional. And critical marketing has opened up much more the role of questioning and critique and analysis of what a marketing manager actually does from a critical and empirical point of view, and go on to do research on it. [...] social media stuff – I wouldn't be an expert on it – but where mainstream marketing is struggling to conceptualize, research, and understand in practice social media on marketing. [...] I don't think we need a lot of critical marketing either but you know I'd burn a flame like that because that's the sort of thing we'd like. Whereas in mainstream marketing they don't like that because all their existing assumptions are there going out the window. (Oscar)

This kind of critique in research often involves choosing among alternative approaches and looking for the best fit with a particular research question or problem. As I have discussed previously, this is sometimes rooted in the critical nature of one's education. As Sophie says, "the approach [in the country I studied in] is very much that, again, depending on what you want to look at, depending on what the problem is you want to think about, you have to then choose from that toolbox" but it is always "from a critical, sceptical, non-mainstream, non-corporate point of view" (Sophie).

To what extent can a theory from a toolbox offer radical critique of a phenomenon is arguable but nevertheless this is the approach taken in most (critical) studies of management (cf. Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). Every theory has toolbox-like qualities

inasmuch as it offers a simplified and (partially) generalized explanation of a phenomenon. But philosophical and social scientific theories used in management and organization studies are often borrowed ready-made from outside this field. As Spoelstra (2007) argues, philosophy is often conceptualized as the “under-labourer” for the social sciences. Similarly, social theory is often picked up and applied to fill gaps spotted in management research, which “reinforces rather than challenges already influential theories” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011: 247). Picking and choosing from a toolbox assumes that the researcher knows several theories waiting to be made context-dependent, has a research question that helps in the selection of the appropriate theory, and is able to judge the fit of these two in advance of actually doing research. These theoretical shortcuts then – certainly “useful” under the conditions explored in Chapter 4 – result in the loss of the creative power of philosophy (Spoelstra, 2007) and of “interesting theories” in management studies (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011: 247). I don’t mean to say that there are different kinds of theories (toolbox ones and something else) but rather that the way theories are used is different. To use the analogy of difference between organization as a distal unit and organizing as an ongoing activity, toolbox represents “theories” as opposed to the continuous process of “theorizing”. As Hall affirms, “a critical and deconstructive project [e.g. cultural studies] is always operating on the progressive/regressive movement of the need to go on theorizing. I am not interested in Theory, I am interested in going on theorizing” (Hall in Grossberg, 1986: 60).

A second approach would be to include any and all kind of theories into the toolbox of possible approaches. For example, Noah told me how “critical approaches are just one of many possible ones for me. I use them because they are useful in theorizing the relationship between individual identities and accounting systems” (Noah). Alternatively, and strangely more critically towards the status quo, one can also be disinterested in whether theories they use are usually classed as critical or mainstream ones. “The standard stuff that I was doing, you know, it’s just... just looking at whatever phenomena that happened to catch my interest and then trying to look at them using all different various theoretical and epistemological tools that I have – being somewhat agnostic to, you know, why or what – what’s it called – ontological paradigm, theory or method or approach... Pragmatic. Yeah, pragmatic” (Amelia).

James’s embodied action is individually focused and critiques FUSO and the university, while as researchers critique is again focused on one individual’s action in reformulating a problem – hoping, of course, that it will produce some kind of an effect on

the world – concerning a segment of the world that is not about this particular institution. The module leader mentioned above and Joshua on the other hand exhibit community orientated critiques. These are varieties of “criticality” at play here along the intersections of three aspects. First, critique is sometimes oriented toward the local context of FUSO or Flatshire University, often condemning both or the University vis-à-vis FUSO. At other times, it is not the local, the immediate working environment but some other aspect of the world that is being critiqued. This includes a wide range of possibilities that varies with individuals’ particular research topics as well as with their wider interests (in social issues), and incorporates a very broad range from, for instance, financial econophysics to the ethics of care in permacultures. Second, critique may focus on directly engaging with a community, or having the primary focus on how the individual staff member interprets or acts in the world. Finally, critique may be oriented more towards researching and theorizing a certain issue in a disembodied way, or towards embodying activism.

These separations are far from being clear cut. They are often also very temporary given that, say, an individual-oriented research-focus may easily and relatively quickly transform into a form of critical communal practice. Staff members continuously oscillate between these nodes. However, separating them analytically allows me to conceptualize a certain gravity towards each node as it reveals itself in the snapshots of life in FUSO that my interviews and observations have provided. For instance, having discussed the areas of teaching and research, I always asked interview participants if there were any other aspects in their lives where they thought criticality played a part. Social activism, situated at the node of embodied focus on the world of the community beyond the local, surfaced only very rarely as an answer to this question. Similarly, they mentioned action research only implicitly as part of some form of engagement with communities. What they did mention almost always and in the first place, was the link between criticality and research. I find this disturbing because that insight is hardly surprising at all. Of course, it may be partly due to academics being interviewed in an academic setting and thinking about research as the most important aspect of their work. Still, it seems to speak about and to two related contexts that create, shape and limit the conditions of possibility of critique in management and organization studies as I argue in the conclusion to this chapter.

6.5. Conclusion

Critique, as I have argued in this chapter, is made possible and is limited by the institutionalization of CMS and the specific form of how this is reflected in the articulation of the schools in my study. This process can only be understood with reference to maintaining various boundaries through the everyday practices of being academics. Attempts at defining a field of management and creating a governing body for a shared community are continually destabilized by the effort to remain outsiders to the business school. It is this tension that produces different forms of doing critique discussed in the previous section. As I said there, the rather traditional academic link between criticality and research mentioned in the interviews is increasingly questioned in two contexts that both go beyond the institutional boundaries of the schools in my study.

The first context is that of CMS. In recent years, not for the first time, CMS has gone through a phase of self-criticism. One aspect of this, exemplified by Tatli's (2012) recent call for a more reflective CMS, expresses the need of turning the critical lens onto critical scholars, and not just at the level of discourse but also looking at the very material circumstances CMS scholars reproduce. Thus, she raises concerns about the white Anglo-Saxon centre in CMS and the exclusion of "different" voices – both reproduced in and by our own organizations. Bell and King (2010: 438) in an autoethnographic case study of CMS conferences conclude that "theoretical sensitivity to power relations does not necessarily prevent participation in practices that are excluding to others or translate into a commitment to transform oppressive, exclusionary practices". They then suggest routes to change conferences by challenging their rationalist masculine undertone, and thus transform the CMS community too. Rowlinson and Hassard (2011) also draw attention to how teaching management critically may counterintuitively exert a material influence on underprivileged students if the theories, mentality, and practical (business) skills we teach them put them at a disadvantaged position in their search for jobs.

The second context concerns the engagement of CMS beyond the walls of the university, with research participants and the general public. Having grown out of the (academic) rigour versus (professional-practical) relevance debate of management scholarship in the 1990s, engagement through research (and education, as I argue in the concluding Chapter 8) has been a crucial question, and often problem, for CMS. Alvesson, Bridgman and Willmott (2009) note that the widespread understanding of the "non-performative" intent of CMS has been misread as "anti-performativity" – a general lack of

concern with issues of practical effects. In response, Spicer, Alvesson and Karreman (2009; 2016) promote the idea of “critical performativity”, which has received increased attention in recent years. They argue that an oppositional stance towards performativity precludes the possibilities to trigger change in society by curtailing the number of occasions when scholars’ voices can be heard. Thus, contrary to the assumed non-performative nature of CMS (see Fournier and Grey, 2000), it is precisely a critical engagement, a doing differently, that would be needed to achieve social change in organizations and more broadly. Bridgman (2007) calls for “critical engagement” assuming a public role that is both able to keep the critical aspect of this practice and it can satisfy the need for relevance of the public and practitioner communities. More recently, King and Learmonth (2014) and King (2015) have examined, based on some of the authors’ (former) managerial practice, whether and how critical management is possible to incorporate into the world of practice. Parker and Parker (forthcoming) develop Mouffe’s concept of “agonism” for CMS. They champion engagement with select organizations, ones they come to call “alternative”, in an effort to be clearer about who performativity is “for” (implying of course who it is not for). Their solution to the problem of how CMS should engage with the world and organizations in it, is to “document” alternatives and establish a sort of library that can then be used to facilitate discussions between all kinds of groups – but not directly those managers in big organizations who critical performativity would like to engage with. Although both sets of authors see hope for change to be exerted through doing management differently, they claim that such changes come slowly, they involve constant struggle and hence are never really complete, and usually happen in very limited contexts (see also Fleming and Banerjee, 2016).

The common element in these two contexts is that they both encourage CMS to do “more”. In the framework I have presented before, they demand and/or encourage more embodied action either directed at ourselves both individually and as a loose community, or done with other communities. And they can do so because it is research that first comes into the minds of the scholars I have interviewed when criticality is raised as a topic. Ironically, by reiterating the distinction between theory and practice, the articles listed above inscribe themselves into the realm of the former – and, being theory, do not do too much. But this is not the case. As a relay between practices, in this case the managerial and the engaged critical academic, this emerging literature precisely perform their role to encourage critical business and management scholars to engage with communities of practice outside their own. They are performative both in sustaining the division between theory and practice that they criticize and in overcoming it.

At which point, we can ask who this division serves and what configuration of power keeps it in place. And this brings us to the second context in interaction with which both CMS and FUSO have to be situated. While one can postulate an ethical-political position from which certain practices are more critical than others, doing so would prematurely close the analysis of the particular circumstances and define the necessary political route to be taken from the very start. Assuming “good” and “bad” forms of critique (or its lack altogether) does not explain how the variety of critical practices, in the broad sense of “challenging the status quo” as understood in this section, get most commonly reduced to doing theory. Critique is contextual, and in the current academic environment in the UK, the very material circumstances that critical management scholars broadly understood are encouraged to appreciate push them towards submitting to the idea of relevance.

Spoelstra and Svensson (2016) argue for the need to sidestep this drive and open up problems instead of offering solutions, or even to appreciate the uselessness of scholarship. Performativity is not something that is done but it is always already in motion (see Butler, 1990). Spoelstra and Svensson’s (2016) position, we have to see, is also a product of the complex relationships between various contexts that define what forms of critique are more readily available and are counted as more or less critical. As long as impact in the discourse of relevance is understood as serving businesses, this is a way for neoliberal capitalism to differentiate between forms of criticality. Critique, thus, can only be theoretical because if it attempts to be practical, it is by definition rendered not impactful. It is for this reason that more marginally practiced embodied forms of action and the promotion of uselessness become the most powerful kinds of critique at the moment, as long as the definition of “impact” cannot be widened, with their conditions of possibility differentiated between conception and execution, and tilted in favour of the former.

One could of course object that I have omitted a rather important section of academic life from this account so far. Namely, students and teaching, as a possible source of critique and engagement. In the next chapter, therefore, I turn to their issues in an effort to investigate the forms of critique that CME offers.

CHAPTER 7

US AND YOU:

ON TEACHING USEFUL CRITIQUE

Literature on critical management education describes teaching as an important immediate arena where CMS could have a lasting impact. But as I have shown in Chapter 4, the current understanding of impact in UK higher education as benefit to businesses largely influences what this can actually mean. Students' reflections on their education, presented in the next section, shine some light on the constraints that shape accepted forms of impactful education. These constraints partly explain why, despite their theoretical importance for CMS, there have been relatively few accounts of undergraduate teaching methods discussed in the CME literature (see Chapter 1) and there is a slowly growing number of textbooks since Fulop's overview of the field (2002). My findings show that the research focus of universities pushes educators away from a deeper consideration of teaching practices. Teaching is seen by my participants an important activity to express criticality but the educational content often becomes more important than finding appropriate pedagogical methods.

The guiding question of this chapter is echoed in Perriton's (2014: 392) proposed research agenda for CME, where she urges researchers to ask "whether a marketized education system reduces the scope for the critical teaching of management, in terms of either content or process". In my analysis, as before, I will rely on interviews with teaching staff members as well as literature on (critical) management education. In this chapter, however, I complement these sources with more use of my observations at the classes and meetings I visited, and the interviews I conducted with third-year undergraduate students about their studies and perception of FUSO.

Continuing in the spirit of Chapter 6, this chapter again builds on the idea of radical contextuality (Grossberg, 2010, 2013). I find a lack of discussion about and institutional engagement with teaching management critically at my sites, which then becomes a case of tutors mostly changing the content of their classes only. I argue that this is largely due to criticality acquiring its meaning in the contexts analysed in the preceding chapters combined with the discourses of employability and relevance discussed in this chapter, which makes content-driven changes challenging to introduce and challenging the current articulation of business education at once. This chapter also shows the point where the idea of articulation as a purely intentional process breaks down (cf. Papadopoulos, 2006) as critical management education rarely seems to reach its intended goal of developing reflexive and critical students. This again underscores the importance of highlighting both the prevarication already present in the moment of encoding educational messages (Dicks, 2000) as well as the multiple non-linear links between educators, students, the specific business schools and the ontological epoch that mutually define each other (Slack, 1996). By investigating these processes, the chapter paves the way to the discussion of the performativity (Learmonth et al., 2016) of education in Chapter 8.

7.1. Students' perceptions

Ava wanted to quit the management studies programme after the first two lectures. She called her dad to tell him that she has made up her mind but eventually agreed to postpone the decision with a few more weeks. Management hardly provides the “very special encounter” (Aidan) tutors would like it to be from the students' point of view or, as several of my respondents straightforwardly put it, it is boring. This boredom has different sources and it generates different ways of coping. Ava claims that “practice is more diverse and emergent” and is at odds with classroom models that are “taught step-by-step, almost like scientific management”. And Leo complains about boredom for the lack of “real world orientation” in most modules. These two statements invoke a classical problem of student feedback; namely, what one means when they say that a certain class is boring. They may refer to the particular type of education and ultimately the tutor who delivers the module, thus drawing attention to the affective element in (critical management) education. After all, as I'm going to show in the next sections, CME boils down to more general questions of good teaching. But the mention of boredom may also reflect recognition of the content as boring, for which good teaching can only provide a marginal cure.

Dissatisfaction with either FUSO or management studies, and the constant calls to critical discussion and thinking nevertheless fuels a critical attitude. Not surprisingly then, my student respondents invariably agree with FUSO's slogan and the supposed core of its model that "the nature of management is too important to be decided upon by managers alone" (Benjamin). Some of them define criticality precisely as "the evaluation of knowledge in different contexts" (Ava) or by claiming that "university [...] is meant to give you a different perspective and make you analyse things more" (Lewis) where "being critical means questioning what you do, seeing if things can be done in different ways" (Jayden). Others would go even further and talk about "making explicit the fact that assumptions are being made [...] and focusing attention on them" (Charlotte). Students' critique sometimes naturally extends to FUSO itself where, as Ava says, tutors "tell us organizations are bad but they're the same". Regarding the fact that not all papers and exams are second marked, she continues, "They don't listen [...] the rule should be in the interest of students". At other times, they complain that discussions rarely take place because their peers are not prepared for the class and hence the conversation. As we'll see over the next paragraphs, a critical discussion of questions of business and management can serve various purposes for students, which may not align with those of staff members at FUSO.

Dissatisfaction and job search

Leo mentions Global Marketing and Consumer Culture, and Business Ethics as two modules that have an appropriate real world orientation. These are rather interesting choices given that Leo, in particular, has admittedly attended the programme only to secure a good enough degree to get a job. He has, however, felt throughout his studies, like so many of his peers, that the education they receive will not directly lead to this result. As a consequence, himself and many of his colleagues have given up on the idea of obtaining valuable knowledge and have resorted to the sheer minimum of attending mandatory classes and sitting through compulsory exams. But they would not prepare for the classes, would not do the readings, and would be generally disillusioned with higher education.

This group of students would be discussed by faculty members in conversations about why students don't read and what we could do to facilitate their doing so, usually exposing so a nostalgic longing for the old times when students were different. It may not have been students, though. The discourse that management education needs to have a real world orientation, that it should have "relevance", has certainly contributed to changing

students' views. Combined with the difficulty of finding time and space to sensitize them to the importance of taking responsibility for their own education, the point of critical reflection on knowledge production and the idea of relevance itself, can easily remain hidden for many students. They might be said to viscerally understand something of the hollowness of their studies – to paraphrase a tutor quoted later, the content of undergraduate management education could be anything.

Harney and Dunne (2013) argue that management (studies) is nothing because it assumes and consequently analyses capitalism without struggle. But given that capitalism as a mode of social organization relies on the enclosure of particular social units and the hierarchized differentiation between these, it is co-existent with struggle. A certain perceived value of management, according to Harney and Dunne (2013), stems from the internal differentiation it makes between various elements of the field. This internal contradiction at the heart of management studies appears to be instinctually perceived by students. Management is boring because it is about nothing. CMS is not different for Harney and Dunne in this regard as “by accepting the opening position that these questions [of a critique of capitalism] come from outside, in both the registers of teaching and scholarship, one could say that critiques of business and management [...] frequently serve to prove the object of business and management scholarship in the face of its own implicit definition of itself as about nothing” (Harney and Dunne, 2013: 344). Their solution is to ignore the usual (critical) curriculum in management studies in favour of discussions about critique that “Rather than seeking to include itself within business and management studies, [...] seeks to include business and management studies as a moment in the operation of capital, a moment wherein capital makes something out of nothing” (Harney and Dunne, 2013: 344-345). How they imagine doing this, though, under the circumstances in which students have already internalized the discourse of relevance, is not a question they answer.

Satisfaction and a critical edge

On the other hand, three of my respondents talked about coming to realize that readings were interesting. For Ava, the topic of emotional intelligence in one particular class acted as a switch to become perceptive to ideas of CMS. But it took time, explained Charlotte and Ava, to come to enjoy the critical literature, and to develop a capability of thinking through assumptions and defending arguments. PhD students sometimes also grapple with understanding critical theory the first time (Batchelor and Fulop, 2003). Once one acquires

this skill, it becomes easier to see, or rather to actively discover, relationships between modules in the curriculum. As Ava says, this is about passion for studying, about “finding value for yourself if you can”, which is undoubtedly something “you can’t decide from the beginning. University doesn’t simply give you all you need to get a good job”.

For this group of students, the curriculum makes sense and by the end of their studies they “can really feel that all the modules are interconnected. It’s really well done; you can see that there are people behind everything who design it in a special way so that it would feel like a solid thing. [...] I’ve always felt that all the modules complete each other” (Jayden) or that they are based on similar ideas and principles (Ava). Amongst these students, there are three distinct groups: those who take on management to make the other half of their joint degree more marketable; those who think of becoming academics; and those who treat criticality as a skill that enhances their employability. With only one exception, students who were happy with their education at FUSO either were on joint programmes (with political science or computer science), or were considering a career in academia.

The first group, somewhat surprisingly, sought to enhance their joint degree. As Lewis says, “I think it’s a good combination [...] it makes you more commercially aware, it gives you that different edge”. These students usually took on management as the addendum, which carries the possibility of becoming the extra qualification and skill set that would make their degree more valuable in the eyes of potential employers. This expectation, for some of them, was actually validated while they were on placement. “I did my year in industry last year and my manager actually hit on that, she said that, she kept telling me that. Management...she said don’t worry about it and she gave me my own project to manage” (Isabella). In this case, management as taught at FUSO may not be appreciated for its critical orientation but simply because it adds something different and potentially useful to students’ education. However, the appreciative comments these students made about management studies seems to suggest that they valued the discussions and readings as well, and not only the added value of the degree.

Another group of students were delighted to have found something that stimulates their thinking. “Most of the professors really do kind of, not stress, but really came forward with the idea that what they do is kind of unconventional, I guess. So I am expecting their research to be cool research and not the boring mainstream kind of stuff they write in *Harvard Business Review*” (Charlotte). They were preparing for an academic career and already knew that eventually they want to study for a PhD. Aware of FUSO’s critical orientation, Charlotte for instance was considering an International Business and Philosophy master’s programme

in Hamburg as a next step in her studies. Therefore, they appreciated the continuous push to think through and defend arguments as a preparation for an academic career.

One respondent, though, expressed a more controversial opinion. For the first twenty minutes of the interview Jayden showed enthusiasm for and understanding of critical approaches. For example, this is how he reflected on his placement experience:

I think it just makes me more critical when I work with some people in some companies. I felt like they didn't question what they were doing. They didn't care, they were just doing what they were told to do. I think that if you want to go further than that, you have to be critical. (Jayden)

Surprisingly, his future plans involved masters in strategy and marketing at Warwick Business School. He's *aware* that his choice implies a move to one of the most corporatized business schools in the UK, which he describes as "very mainstream" (Jayden), unlike the School of Management at the University of Bath, where FUSO staff members tried to persuade him to go because "they also claim to be critical" (Jayden). "It is time to try something different", he explains, because "95 per cent of the world thinks that [critical perspectives are] useless" and "maybe [the change] will help me to get a better job" (Jayden). Even though Jayden thinks the purpose of university education is not "to explain to us how to get things done by Monday morning" (Jayden), ultimately the need for boosting his own employability takes over. In the end he concludes, "Anyhow, I'm critical enough. How much more critical should I get?" (Jayden)

Jayden is the archetypal student that Ethan, a staff member at MUSO, told me about or the students depicted in Fournier (2006) who understand the critical consideration of (often already existing) alternatives as an interesting academic exercise not viable in "real life". This is an interesting take on what being critical might mean: it conveys the idea of a practical skill that can be learnt or a project that can be concluded. This is not surprising given that Jayden believes "in the end, it's all about our abilities and skills". Such a portrayal, however, also echoes how FUSO staff members often explain to students why they should engage with critical approaches. The first lecture of a first-year compulsory module cites an article in the *New York Times* claiming "that concrete business skills tend to expire in five years or so as technology and organizations change. History and philosophy, on the other hand, provide the kind of contextual knowledge and reasoning skills that are indispensable for business students" (Glenn, 2011). Convincing as it may sound, this argument builds on the problematic idea of students' investment in their own employability as the person ultimately responsible for getting (or at present more often, not quite getting) a job (Chertkovskaya, et al., 2013).

What the newspaper quote hides from students the original source in the article, the president of Babson College, an institution amongst those few set as exemplary by the Carnegie Report on using liberal arts in business education (Colby, et al., 2011). Although this Report urges for change in the content and means of business education towards a broader agenda, it leaves unquestioned a fundamental belief in market-based capitalism. In this particular case, it is proven by the fame of Babson College's various programmes in the field of entrepreneurship, delivered by renowned businesspeople. The entrepreneurial agenda has been criticized for driving students towards individualism and an ethic of unfulfillable care for the self (Berglund, 2013). Against this background, Jayden's comment seems to fit perfectly with the message communicated at classes about the value of broader social scientific approaches critical of business.

With one exception all of my student respondents admitted to choosing the universities to apply to after considering league tables and rankings exclusively, and they did not really know where they were coming.

The rationale for the collation and publication of such statistics and league-tables is to make the market more "efficient": by increasing the quantity of information available to applicants, they are then, supposedly, better able to exercise their "consumer rights" in choosing universities that are most "appropriate" to their needs and budget. In reality, such choice is restricted to a core of students with "traditional" school-backgrounds. For the bulk of university-students, poorer and possibly from "disadvantaged" backgrounds, choice is restricted to institutions in their localities or those with looser entry-levels. (De Angelis and Harvie, 2009: 20)

My respondents subscribe to the idea of an important rational choice and they have not mentioned any constraining circumstances. Probably being treated as the all-important consumer nourishes the soul. As De Angelis and Harvie conclude, "[l]ess visibly, capital's *measure* also invades the campus disguised in the rhetoric of 'consumer-satisfaction' and 'value for money'" (2009: 28, emphasis added). For students, a university's ranking expresses the comparable value of their future degree, which subsequently unquestionably translates into the ease and certainty of finding good enough jobs. My respondents did not visit open days, or only did so once they have done the initial screening by league table position, and they did not know what kind of education they would receive. Moreover, the students who have offered to talk to me – an indication of interest in itself – thought that their peers were even less interested in anything else but league table positions before making their choice. Although some elements of FUSO's approach would be immediately obvious from the course description, "maybe they didn't take their time to research the course programme" (Jayden). This also confirms what the majority of staff members of the School and managers

of the University have told me regarding student choices. They have expressed that they don't exactly know if open days have any effect and don't think that FUSO's particular orientation is reflected in student choices at the undergraduate level.

In the context of contemporary higher education, especially with university fees set at £9,000, this may be slowly changing. Students gradually require an explanation of why they are taught the things they learn about – an effect of the discourses of relevance and employability. As a result, the role of open days may be changing accordingly. Joshua, who has participated in organizing some of these events, reflects:

The numbers have grown hugely during the last three years. The reason for that is to some extent obvious. [Students] are gonna be inheriting 50 grand debts, and then they're being very good consumers about this. They're rational decision makers who weigh up all the options before you enter this serious decision, this serious choice – in a way that “hah, let's just try” would have been along before all that. [...] As much as I'd like to take some part of the credit of getting the numbers up, I think it's more of a social anxiety. And that's good, if you look at the numbers. (Joshua)

Students often lack a basis for comparison with other business schools and they might not realize they are engaged in something different to the education they would receive at most other places. Only half of the staff members I talked to actually emphasize in their classes that their approach differs from the usual one business scholars take, which makes it difficult for students to recognize this difference. It can also lead to the “pitfall” of making students unknowingly believe that their critical approach will be a readily accepted benefit in their job (Reynolds, 1999). This is precisely the reason why beyond “good teaching”, a critical process has also been advised in the literature, to avoid the possibility of actually hindering the emancipation of primarily first generation graduates from underprivileged backgrounds (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011).

On the other hand, Charlotte's choice of where to continue her education has fundamentally been shaped by the wider horizon of management studies she was exposed to at FUSO. Students seem to make a conscious choice about their postgraduate taught education preferring places other than the School. At that level, though, FUSO's not-so-unique selling proposition is about being a top management school “with an excellent international reputation for the development and teaching of intellectually stimulating management courses that are highly relevant to your career needs” (FUSO website, 2014). At the level of marketing discourse, catering to the target market assumes importance. At the undergraduate level, the increase in student fees may explain why more people attend the open days but it cannot account for undergraduate student numbers going up. But if students, who started later than my respondents, are becoming more conscious about this

choice, then it's questionable why teaching staff members may nevertheless feel it important to convince students in the usefulness of the particular content. This is even more interesting given that FUSO staff have expressed their belief that students, treated as consumers by Flatshire University marketing, may not be the best judges of what serves them best in the long run (Singh, 2002).

It seems as if a series of assumptions about the behaviour of others made students and tutors act upon these assumptions. Tutors assume that students need to have an explanation as to why they are being taught in a particular way, whereas students have already assumed the education they would receive will lead to getting a (better) job since this is what they are promised by Flatshire University. These assumptions reach the extent that our behaviours and practices adapt to them. They however are rather logical, and in that sense make critically-oriented schools less distinctive sites, if one considers the various contexts of contemporary higher education in the UK, eminently those of the student as consumer and education as investment in one's employability. Common sense explanations, policy frameworks, consumerist ideology are articulated together in these students' narratives with questions of job search and life after graduation; thus making the articulation of the School ooze beyond its own institutional borders. FUSO's model and the scholars working with it both suffer and reiterate these contexts, responding to common pressures in the sector, as I show in the next two sections.

7.2. Management education as liberal arts

FUSO, lecture theatre, book launch. The author, closely affiliated with the School, traces the development of management thought as an ideologically motivated anti-heroic story aiming to produce vulnerable selves prone to succumbing to the capitalist system. He does so through the close reading of foundational management texts written throughout the 20th century. On the panel to discuss the book, are three respondents, all related to the institutions I had done my research at. "This is the first book on management I've read...", starts the first one, and then goes on to talk about various aspects of it. The second panel member starts talking and after a few sentences adds, "I also don't read management books and I hate them". With over 20 undergraduate students in the room, some of whom I encouraged to attend this event in my seminars, I start to feel a bit uncomfortable. A good ten minutes pass when the third speaker announces, "Having received a copy of this one, I now have a whole section of management books on my bookshelf. This is the second book in it".

Of course, it's likely that the majority of management scholars and teachers have not read classics in management, from Weber to Mayo to Chandler, in the original but rather operate with secondary sources on these authors and the topics covered by them. It should also be clear from the previous chapters that academics identifying with some sort of critical study of management can be outright hostile to engaging with management thought and practice. But such sentiments also raise the question of what it is that they (or we, including seminar tutors too) teach. It would be clearly surprising to hear someone in a department of biology or history admit to not having engaged with their object of study. However, the object of management studies has been historically unclear. Most textbooks and mainstream researchers regard it as a study of managers, management, organizations and businesses aimed at enhancing their performance, perfecting their processes, fine tuning their practices (Fournier and Grey, 2000). In terms of teaching then, the goal is to tell students how they can do these things best. The first business schools were set up mostly for practicing managers at the end of the 19th century to facilitate the social acceptance of management as a respectable profession and lecturing businessmen were trying to pass on their best practices to new generations of managers (Khurana, 2007). It should not be surprising that current critics of management education following in this tradition propagate a return to education for professional values (Khurana, 2007) or would like to see management education taught only at the higher levels to students with some work experience.

Approaches critical of management scholarship might take many guises but are unified by the refusal of its performative intent (Fournier and Grey, 2000), its focus on helping organizations become more efficient.³⁷ When it comes to management education, it's important to consider the performative truth-effects (Derrida, 1982) of statements because they lead to different ideas about what to teach (and possibly to different politics too). With the performance-oriented disposition of management education in most business schools, their purpose could read, "management education aims to develop managers". The truth-value of this claim is irrelevant, as I have said in previous chapters too. Rather, it is the widely accepted belief in its truth amongst critical scholars of management that is of interest to me. For instance, in Joshua's words, "as a theme many management textbooks start with this benevolent and pacifist notion of management as a progressive force for good. Nobody, except for management gurus, actually believes that. First year students don't believe that either". The expressed lack of belief in the benevolence of management yields two different positions as it surfaced in my interviews.

³⁷See my discussion of the related topic of "critical performativity" in Chapter 8.

Opposing the performativity of management research and education, that he bundles under the label CMS, “in some ways is a very honest approach to how we should be teaching management” (Joshua). Honesty compels him to discuss the shortcomings of management with students as well. As such, in FUSO’s discourse it often relates to discovering (in research) and uncovering (in teaching) some aspects of management that have historically become accepted, or even common, knowledge. In modules I observed, the dangers of bureaucracies would be discussed through the Nazi war machine (Bauman, 1989). PhD tutors would regularly comment in class on the difficulty of getting jobs after graduation or start a module with pointing out that most (undergraduate) students in the room will first become employees at the bottom of organizational hierarchies rather than managers. For this position, the refusal statement, “management education does not aim to develop managers” makes sense because its aim is to educate *about* and not *for* management.

I really like this analogy Stefano Harney presents one time: if you’re teaching poetry, it’s not your job to be a poet, you can very easily come towards poetry you think is shit, poetry you think is wonderful – and then your job as a teacher is to try and communicate why you love or hate your object. In management education there seems to be an assumption that we’re required to be a champion or advocates of management. And I don’t think that works or exists in any other discipline. (Joshua)

What is promoted here then, is a more serious engagement with management, a scholarship that studies management as a social and historical phenomenon. Teaching in this approach would sensitize students to the often unmentioned elements of management practice and the cleansed narrative of management studies as a largely successful developmental line. Thus, the critique of management from a variety of positions becomes a focal point of teaching too.

There is, however, another possible reading of “management education does not aim to develop managers”. This understanding is built on the idea that management education as such does not make sense – at least at undergraduate level. Students often express in introductory seminars that they have chosen management for lacking a particular interest in any other field and management is open enough to do anything later on, or that they hope to get a job more easily with such a degree. As Jack neatly sums up, “I could teach them anything”. It doesn’t really matter what students are taught because they have not worked yet, because – it is assumed – they don’t care, and because businesses also mostly care about students’ initiation into a culture rather than the specifics (on this latter point, see Grey, 2002). As a consequence, “management and business becomes a proxy for education”, and the business school becomes “a place where, perhaps more than any other department, weirdly, it’s possible to have an interdisciplinary discussion. [A place] where studying

management you're probably just getting an education as it's been understood since what... the 15th century anyway" (Joshua). For whom management education takes up the status of liberal arts, it has to be filled with something else than conventional management thought, and at best it shouldn't even be about management – which might explain the strange statements at the book launch I mentioned in the beginning. In terms of politics, the former stance is reflected in Oscar's reflections on marketing:

I wouldn't say that everyone has to be critical. So my personal view would be a sort of pluralistic set of approaches to marketing not necessarily in different schools or whatever but that students have a think. And marketing should be exposed and should understand the theories, different approaches, and have them developed and so on. Because you know there are areas even within, say, marketing research where for reasons of time and practicality, and even there's a frustration to understand, the general field uses traditional quantitative methods. Is this the most appropriate? Open point. The question is how do you answer that and how do you follow up. (Oscar)

Pushing the questions further and destabilizing academic conventions, reflecting on the same problem from a variety of standpoints is what this position would entail in research. This in turn is reflected in the way these research participants think about education too. They teach students the "basics" of their field and then turn to critiquing those by inviting students to ask the hard questions about silences. As a FUSO brochure says, "we favour the use of a wide range of methods in attempting to understand and unpick management and organizations. This is why [FUSO] houses the largest body of heterodox researchers across the core disciplines of accounting and finance, marketing and organization studies in the world".

Sometimes this approach can follow not from the pluralist worldview of the tutor in question but rather an alleged expectation of what students need in the future, want at present, or are capable of and willing to do. As James says,

I'm not sure I want to be critical, all of that, with the average undergraduate who wants a degree in marketing [...] and wants to work in real estate. I'm not gonna chuck all that critical stuff at them. There are problems also with passion there, and it wouldn't work anyway. So I think you could probe and poke. You see it through our legitimation where people [...] will say, [...] I'm gonna make x more efficient by doing y . And do you believe that? And I'm not sure what they're thinking. And I'm not sure they do that in their work. And then you begin to pick and poke.

James's expectations about what a student who wants a job may expect from the course shape what he would deem appropriate knowledge. There is a double distancing going on here where students assume what they need to get a job and tutors assume something about what students think. We could hardly be further from the individualizing "banking

model” of education (Freire, 1970) in which students are assumed to receive ready-made knowledge from their tutors. Rather such simplification happens because of the institutional environment that constrains the extent to which students’ expectations can be discovered and discussed, the social context that structures students’ expectations, and the resulting lack of “passion” for study that does not feel immediately relevant to one’s goals. (Largely because this goal is often to get a job in order to live well and to pay back one’s student loans.)

The second position entails even less engagement with management, and can take the form of an exploration of wider interdisciplinary issues around “pressing global problems facing us today: the persistence of war, violence, the degradation of the natural environment, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, unhealthy and unsafe work environments, work-life imbalance and the unequal global distribution of wealth, to name but a few” (FUSO brochure). It can also mean a movement away from management strictly understood towards other forms of organization of economic exchange but also social life more broadly. But taken to its logical conclusion, this position presents a fundamental contradiction. Since the reading that management is empty would often be coupled with the belief that business schools represent capitalism’s current encroachment of education, the way to a better society should logically lead through the abandonment of the business school in its current form. If that means working on transforming the business or management school into something like a “School of Organizing” (Parker, 2016), the contradiction could be resolved. If it means abolishing the discipline, it is hard to see how this could be done on a salary from the same institution and increasingly confined by what counts as excellent research and teaching, with the latter including student satisfaction and employability.

Engaging more with management and engaging less with it are both viable alternatives in critiquing mainstream management education. What unifies these two approaches is an attempt to rely on more than management studies alone, thereby transgressing the artificial disciplinary separations that exist in universities. It is in this sense that students receive more an education and less a professional training at FUSO. They are not just taught what they need to know to get a job, as if that could be defined, but crucially, and as Sophie points out unlike at other places, students “may be more aware of why they’re being taught what they’re being taught”. Such honesty partly stems from the School’s and staff members’ concern “with challenging the status quo rather than perpetuating it [and] creat[ing] space to debate management” (FUSO webpage, 2013). But is also a response to students’ anticipated resistance to discussing ideas that do not confirm their expectations about what management education is. As a first year student heckled during a lecture for a

core module on the emergence of the modern university as an institution, “What has any of this got to do with management?” With students being recast as consumers in the corporate university, such questions demand an answer and become more demanding to answer. Had this interruption not occurred, the next slide would have illustrated the opening of universities in industrial cities to service the emerging middle classes.³⁸ But that the university has a historical tendency to service the managerial middle class might also seem to fall outside the remit of management studies.

7.3. It’s all about good teaching

An answer to such student questions has locally been a particular kind of management education, dubbed “the FUSO model”, that favours a mixture of the two positions, discussed in the previous section. Loosely based on “critical management studies sentiments” (Aidan) an aim of the model is asking students “to realize that the form of management we get in management textbooks is quite a reified form. I think that’s a useful gesture that CMS has made” (Joshua). Hence, management has to be investigated further. However, this supposedly unique model of teaching is far from being as straightforward as a cursory look at FUSO’s website would suggest. There are at least three reasons for this that I discuss below. After that, I move on to investigate how research participants actually understand this model.

First, in a written form it only exists on FUSO’s website. The description occupies the centre of the screen when one goes onto the page of undergraduate programmes offered by FUSO, and for anyone looking for such information it would be really hard to miss. I have not come across any other document in which it is mentioned. There is therefore a largely informal set of information around “our unique approach to management education” (FUSO website, 2013) following from the history and legacy of the School. As Aidan says, it is more about “sentiments” and “it’s not systematic really”. Joshua concurs,

I think [FUSO] has a style of management education. I think [the model] does exist but it’s not universal across the School. I think there are some people who feel a

³⁸Vince (2010) offers some reflection on how CME might benefit from such instances of anxiety, produced in this case only by some unexpected content. They may offer a route into exploring the relationships between management, learning, and politics. What Vince does not discuss, though, is what happens with those students who become detached as a result, and whose potentially very negative course evaluation is increasingly exploited by university management for a tutor’s individual performance evaluation.

connection to [it] and so they try practice their interpretation of it within the classroom. But again for the most part [...] it's not a policy. (Joshua)

New staff members are not introduced to the model, nor is there any kind of training provided at a later stage to help one understand its aims and implications and adapt it to their own practice. Partly, as I argue in this chapter, this is because of a general lack of discussion around teaching at FUSO. But beyond that, I believe it is also because of the model's organic development in the School's early organizational culture (see the second point below). Nevertheless, participants of my research knew about the model and used concepts similar to the ones used on the website to describe it. Given that the website is intended to be read by external groups, mainly students, one could assume that the model is described for them. This may well be the case, and I discussed in the previous chapter how open days and additional information may become more important with time – which would make the FUSO model and its presentation fulfil a role of differentiation and positioning on a rather crowded educational market. However, as I showed in Section 7.2, the students I interviewed rarely considered such information before selecting where they wanted to study – which contradicts its prime presentation on the website. Speculatively then, it might actually be for internal communication through this detour into external communication – as a way to offer a rationale for choosing this particular heterodox orientation in research and teaching.

Second, FUSO's model is of course not without its own genealogy. As James reflects,

I think the [FUSO] model is created by [the former Head when it became a separate School], around [his] time. Yeah, I mean before that there was the Keele model...and before that there was Warwick. So I don't think [FUSO's] model was invented when people came [here]. I think the Keele model before, that was the model. People were doing the same thing in Keele before [coming here] and a lot of the people came from Keele. So yeah I knew it long before it became [FUSO's] model. [...] How do I relate to it? It's normal. Because that's what we did [elsewhere], that's what [the former Head] did. (James)

FUSO is the place where this model has eventually been given open institutional recognition and became reified as a model. Or to continue with the speculative line of thought, where it has been exploited for marketing purposes with an aim to capitalize on some form of first-mover advantage. We saw in Chapter 6 how academics in general, and of a critical orientation in particular, move around the UK both in order to get promotions and to move to places that favour their approach to management research and education – often fleeing ones that do not. Several staff members worked together before at other universities, and while their ways may have diverged for some time afterwards, they came to work together again at FUSO. This was in part a planned effort at establishing a new School at

“the tail end of the institutional establishment” (Harry) by the former Head who oversaw the transition to school status. The conscious decision to do something different underscores a conceptualization of articulation as intentional engagement to re-shape the politics of a given discursive field. But the conditions of possibility of the emergence of FUSO’s model as we can see in the quotation above both stem from the institutionalization of CMS (discussed in Chapter 6) and the current context of management education in the UK that can fruitfully exploit such differences as a question of choice.

Finally, and as a result of the previous two points, the model is not shared by everyone. Judgements made about this depend on one’s perception of what the model entails, how it should be understood, and the resulting expectations these create regarding others’ practices. My respondents were generally satisfied with the way teaching is done at FUSO. But there were at least three positions regarding expectations of what the School’s model should be like. The first one contrasts with Aidan’s understanding that the model is about “aligning our teaching and this increasingly publicly accessible set of outputs that we’re working on here”, that is, our research. In James’s narrative, it should be reflected more widely in FUSO’s practices as a general principle.

Marton: Would you say that the work done here and most of the teaching in the School lives up to what you imagine...

James: ...I don’t know how it goes on but I’d suggest – yes. I’m fine with teaching. So I think the teaching apart we don’t live up to it. The way we behave, the way we run the department, the way we think of ourselves, the way we interact with externals, parts of the university, where we think ourselves different.

If one conceives of the model as a comprehensive alternative way to running a business/management school, which includes teaching but is not reduced to it as it happens to be in the only available description on the website, then what is being done currently (as discussed in Chapter 5), may not seem like pushing the boundaries far enough. Second, if one expects that there would be something different at FUSO than at other schools, either from previous experience here as a student or by word of mouth, they may be curious about what this entails and from where they could learn more about it. As Isla says – certainly partly to appear as a “proper” member of staff, “I don’t know too much about [the model]. But I would love to know more!” Such a stance is often attributed by those with longer tenure to FUSO’s recent growth without giving consideration to how difficult it may be to find information about what using the model would mean. Thirdly, conceived as a model of teaching, one might expect the model to be able to accomplish something with students and through them change the world of business and management. But Sophie remarks, “It would

be nice to say we all know some really good cracking methodology for teaching students to think in a critical way. But I couldn't tell you it'd be [at FUSO] though". Moreover, "you don't necessarily need CMS to make that gesture [of critiquing management textbooks]" (Joshua).

Staff members I talked to were aware of FUSO's "ethos", which expression sometimes came up in emails and discussions too, even if the model is not a school-wide policy. What this means in practice is unsurprisingly unclear: a way of running the School, a way of teaching, expressing a shared point of view, a set of topics for research, etc. It is not a certain confusion or heterodoxy – depending on one's position – that is interesting here but the discrepancy between having a singular "FUSO model" on the website and a lack of discussion about what it looks like. Such discussions certainly took place in the past, maybe at Warwick or Keele or elsewhere, and making the classroom critical can also take various forms. But I found hardly any evidence of discussion about teaching in particular or the model in general that could make expectations open and try (or not) to find a compromise. This may be because "teaching is irrelevant to individual's career prospects" (James). The belief that a good researcher who makes it to professorial level is by implication a skilled educator seems to be engrained in UK academia. Since higher education is about knowledge transmission, and in theory the most knowledgeable make it to the highest level, professors should be the best source of knowledge for students. Yet we know that some of the big professors are not very good teachers and some great educators never progress to professorial level.

The UK Government's currently proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016), at the level of rhetoric, is intended to correct this biased perception. To the extent that it would recognize teaching as an important aspect of academia, it is commendable. However, it is also devised to counteract the reification of the historical primacy of research by the REF. At the moment, the TEF is proposed to install new measures of teaching quality to make institutions comparable and upon reaching certain set goals allow them to increase their fees in line with inflation. But the way this would be done is by using already collected data on student satisfaction and other variables. And just like the REF, the new system would likely result in more isomorphism across educational institutions in the grip of satisfying students' needs and perceptions of the immediate return on their educational investment. Teaching differently

may carry a major risk for the institution.³⁹ My respondents' perceptions of FUSO's model and the fact that there's not much discussion of teaching going on emerged before the Government published its Green Paper on the TEF in November 2015, but both are likely to need re-evaluation in response to this development. As a consequence, talking about teaching seems to become a necessity but talking about teaching differently may be challenged even more than before.

7.4 Critical management education in context

To explore my interview participants' perceptions of FUSO's model, I first discuss some of the ideal types presented in the literature on CME. Attempts at introducing such approaches are often curtailed by a set of limiting contextual forces. In light of this literature it appears both understandable and strange that a sharp contradiction exists – in my participants' accounts and their practices I observed – between the content of their teaching and the methods they use in the classroom. I explore this contradiction below in relation to the types of critique presented in Chapter 6 before turning to potential routes of rearticulation in the last chapter.

Theoretical tracks towards a critical pedagogy of management

Responding to my question about the FUSO model, Joshua describes his approach to discussions with students.

I say here's where I'm coming from, here's what I want to do, I'm quite happy for you to disagree with me in your essay but...you know, I think that puts you in a more honest relationship to the students. I kinda think that CMS education or critical management education are [...] just about taking this honest position with the students. In particular, Chris Grey's work on critical management education – it's a vote to not seeing the students as something you have to inform but as someone who is involved in some sort of discussion. (Joshua)

Questions abound regarding this correspondence between the FUSO model and CME. What counts as critical management education? What does it mean in terms of educational content and methodology? And “how would you know?” (James) that it exists –

³⁹Even if the proposal at the moment would use aggregated institutional scores rather than ones from college or departmental level. With most business schools being one of the biggest in their respective universities, hence their scores having a substantial effect on the overall scores, they are likely to be monitored more closely.

do the other institutional systems, regulations, processes, actions confirm and put in practice some of the ideas taught? As Fenwick (2005: 36) ironically remarks, “critical disciples may appear pathetically unsuccessful to our students, a collection of outdated Marxist refugees or hopelessly inactive academics comfortably drawing tenured salary within bureaucracies”. In the management learning literature, claims Reynolds (1997: 312), “while concerns for a critical perspective address the *content* of management education, little is said as to how educational *methodology* should equally reflect a critical position. [...] A critical management pedagogy should be reflected in both content and methodology”. In the quote above, Joshua also nods to the idea that CME should involve an exchange of ideas rather than a largely unidirectional communication of information. This is a very important point and I return to questions of content and methodology below.

In a review of CME literature, Choo (2007: 486–487) synthesizes the following characteristics with regard to content, process and, adding to Reynolds’ definition above, the learning environment: they should aim at developing a social commitment among managers and students; provide a humanistic education broader than the current technocratic one; do so through a more egalitarian, collective process of inquiry that is reflexive and political; and use assessment that is open to discussion about the inequalities it implies and reproduces. Reynolds (1997) discusses the use of critical pedagogy in management education, as a broader category than CME. For him, this includes process-based approaches and approaches of situated learning. In the UK, both of these have their origin in radical educational theory in adult and further education, that CME could later build on (Perriton, 2007). While critical approaches to management education comprise a broader category than and provide an important historical condition for CME to appear, students at undergraduate level may lack the experience necessary for them to work. Reynolds (1997: 320) identifies four broad characteristics of teaching and learning that one might expect to find in such settings, “the first in relation to ‘content’, and the rest in relation to ‘process’”.

1 The curriculum: access to critical treatment of management theory and practice in various disciplines (accounting, organizational theory, and so forth).

2 Structures, procedures and methods: teaching/learning methods and procedures which are non-hierarchical, providing choice, opportunities for dialogue and influence over the programme’s design and content.

3 Introduction to critical perspectives: some of which may be included in the curriculum (gender, ideas on the practice of critical reflection) but are applied to the learning process (together with ideas on pedagogy and the analysis of social dynamics).

4 Reflexivity: applying critical perspectives to understanding one's own position in relation to the educational process, and to understanding and managing the learning milieu jointly with participants.

Both authors emphasize a commitment to dialogue and breaking down the traditional power imbalance between students and tutors combined with the introduction of critical perspectives. And both offer these characteristics as a sort of ideal types that attend to and manage to combine each and every element for a “truly” critical management education.

Not surprisingly, others have paid more attention to limits, consequences, and problems of CME building on their own or others' actual experiences with introducing courses along the lines set out above. As Reedy and Learmonth (2009: 245–246) succinctly put it, a purely practice-focused approach might even reinforce “conventional management control [...] by legitimating ‘business as usual’ as long as one is critically reflective about it”. Grey, Knights and Willmott (1996) discuss some of the institutional constraints that limit what CME can do. If one wants to move away from the type of education where a supposedly objective set of knowledges is transmitted to students, there are three options. What they call staff development approach, focuses on using “better” teaching methods to convey the same knowledge either in terms of practical relevance, or by being alert to the lived experience of students. The disciplinary approach would distance itself from the question of relevance and argue that a codified set of knowledges must be learnt by any practitioner of the discipline in question, thus keeping tutors' role as experts. Finally, the critical approach aims at sensitizing students to the conditions of knowledge production by problematizing their own everyday experiences.

They then go on to discuss how this last approach in contemporary universities requires tutors' investment of additional time into building relationships and delivering the course often at venues outside of the formal classroom. Discussions tend to work much better with small groups and if one is able to run smaller, participative lectures – both of which are in contrast with current trends. They describe the sort of existential threat induced by student participation in shaping the course: first, not having the “comfort blanket” for both students, in terms of not being able to depend on ready-made knowledge, and lecturers, who have to deal with being challenged and their loss of an authority-based position; and, second, by the level of commitment and effort required vis-à-vis the increasing pressure on time. Finally, the discourse of relevance, competences and skills, reduces education to the production of technocrats as opposed to rounded intellectuals.

Choo (2007) also identifies some factors in interviews with tutors who have attempted to introduce critical, humanistic, and liberal elements into management education, which can limit the process. These include: the requirement of relevance to employers and promoted by accreditation bodies that favours skills oriented education; the apparent measurability and objectivity of orthodox management curricula upheld by the majority of tutors and business school managers; the individualizing use of critical reflection without implications for the wider social context; the pressure on staff members' time, hard-to-manage class sizes, and rigid assessment structures don't lend themselves easily to a more engaging and consultative approach and it would be hard to find time for staff development; power relations and peer pressure between staff members.

While the authors above focus on problems and limitations around the introduction of a critical approach, Reynolds (1999), potentially in response to his own framework (Reynolds, 1997) presented above, discusses some of the consequences that may follow its introduction. He describes three pitfalls that CME should look out for. First, students, internalizing the consumerist discourse as we have seen, may resist ideas of CMS. Elevating such reflexive inquiries to a conceptual level, Fournier (2006) emphasizes that a focus on critiques of capitalism is itself "capitalocentrist" inasmuch as it stipulates capitalism as an unstoppable all-encroaching force. Thus, both processual and content-driven approaches to CME will likely end up framed in terms of capitalist practices if students are not equipped with an "alternative vocabulary" and the ability to imagine ruptures in the unfolding of history. Murillo and Vallentin (2015) suggest a liberal pluralist solution to this problem. In their terminology, "responsibilization" should not mean imposing a particular set of values on students that tutors think are better than what gets expressed in orthodox management education.⁴⁰ Instead, educators should attempt to open up discussions around the epistemological, external institutional, and internal organizational contexts which legitimate certain knowledges and make students reflect on the implicit assumptions and explicit constraints of knowledge production.

Although this is a sensible framework, their proposal does not fully take into account the existing power relation between more mainstream and more critical approaches in business schools that they discuss in the first part of their paper. Reynolds' (1999) second

⁴⁰Their use of the term "responsibilization" is also indicative in this sense as it refers to making future managers better understand their responsibility to society. Contrast this with Grey (1997: 706), whose Foucauldian understanding of responsibilization as "the regulation of subjectivity in ways which inculcate habits of self-control, self-management, planning, etc." highlights the broader problem with management education creating governable persons.

potential pitfall is precisely the possibility of the assimilation or watering down of CMS ideas into mainstream management discourses. I agree with Murillo and Vallentin (2015) that the scepticism of students towards CSR, for instance, might provide an entry point to valuable discussions but this is not necessarily generalizable to other fields like finance or marketing. While the idea of genuine CSR feels “naturally” in contradiction with the profit motive, this cannot be said about finance, and marketing has already recuperated consumers’ scepticism into its dominant discourse. In addition, both are further aided by their mostly science-like quantitative nature.

As a third pitfall, students may face difficulties in (re-)entering their workplaces and attempting to be critical, which might as well put their employment at risk. This possibility is also raised by Fenwick (2005: 34) who calls it “a classic existential split: the critical *I* enunciating critique of the managerial subject *me* that is the former (or future) self?”. Such situations may retrospectively put in doubt their education given that attitudes and approaches of ethical reflection valued at the educational institution can be discouraged at work. As a potential fourth pitfall, Hagen, Miller and Johnson (2003) discuss four aspects of difficulties tutors may experience as a consequence of putting on a critically-oriented course underscoring some of the previously listed concerns: dynamics between members of the teaching team; reflection on the imposition of a particular set of knowledges; frustration caused to students by particular topics; and the gendered nature of critique perceived as authentic in academia.

With such difficulties for a critical or pluralistic management education, I will now turn to how participants in my research understand FUSO’s model. In most of what follows I discuss teaching at FUSO in relation to elements outlined in the literature above. I believe if discussion about teaching were to take place openly in the School, that might involve the creation or clarification of a shared, though not necessarily consensual, position about the ideal education too. In each interview I asked whether my discussion partner felt that the education provided at their institution lived up to their idea of good management education. The answers, without exception, were affirmative but always contained a nod towards the idea that this is just a relative position in comparison with other business and management schools. Staff at FUSO alluded to the fact that there’s always more to do to reach the ideal educational situation, that “we’re a little bit our way along the track but we surely have opened up where the track is and what we’re doing” (Oscar). But the track, it seems to me, when it comes to teaching, is laid very individually.

Content and method in context

Including topics and theoretical approaches alien to most business schools is one of the core features of how the FUSO model operates. The only available definition suggests a content-based difference in teaching to other schools, claiming that it interrogates management's implication in such global issues as “the persistence of war, violence, the degradation of the natural environment, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism/disablism, homophobia, unsafe working environments, work-life imbalance, global inequality, to name but a few” (FUSO website, 2013). For instance, in one module Joshua teaches

Marx and commodity fetishism [...] pointing out that consumer culture relies upon the exploitation of global labour. And a few students have come up to me and said that they didn't really see the relevance of this sort of observation to them as management students. [...] My response to that is less appreciative. I just say, “well, you're wrong”. [Laughs.] I'm quite happy to sit down with them and try to make the case. I think that's my approach to these things, and it's an outcome of my own training and my own sort of biases.

Such a teaching strategy is aimed at developing students' mental capacities through reasoning and is similar to what academics have done over the past centuries. But even the rather managerialist “staff development approach” outlined above by Grey, Knights and Willmott (1996), recognizes that students are emotional beings and that the learning environment and style of students are also important factors in providing successful education. Moreover, educators' “biases” are also a form of affective relationship to particular (dis)liked theories and scholars. Such affective elements of teaching and learning, though, were even less considered in discussions with research participants than, as I will go on to show, discussions of pedagogical methods.⁴¹

The module descriptions I saw and the classes I visited were often based on topics or readings that express and reinforce an approach to management education rooted in the social sciences and humanistic studies. Aidan's understanding of FUSO's model and his own practices follows this approach combined with a sensitivity to making these debates relevant to students' everyday experiences:

I think at the most fundamental level it's about arranging materials. So how do materials, that might be lecture slides or just the content of your lecture slides or

⁴¹This of course highlights my affective and cognitive relation to theories of affect too. Beyond hints at the importance of affect throughout the thesis, especially in this present chapter, it is part of my future plans to engage with the role of affect in higher education (e.g. Bell and Sinclair, 2014; Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012; Swan, 2005) and re-analyse the data collected from this perspective in the future.

reading materials, organize into something together materially for students that you can deliver and know that that will – I’m just building on my own values here again – bridge work on this conduit from critical elite models to what are the problems that undergraduates face. [...] So having good materials and then having the confidence that I’ll be able to deliver that in a way that students hopefully find accessible and engaging and meaningful. (Aidan)

However, although he seems to pay a lot of attention to selecting and making relevant these materials, he talks about the tutor delivering these to the students. Confined by the structural constraints of contemporary university education, he doesn’t aim at problematizing students’ experiences and the way knowledge is produced, but rather one-sidedly tries to relate to those experiences. There is one class at undergraduate level, an option in the third year, that explicitly aims to engage with students’ work experience on placement programmes. In the module, student experience is elicited to be subsequently built on in class and examined reflexively by the students. However, the module operates at the level of trying to find similarities between particular student experiences and one or other set of (critical) theories. This is not to say that more critical pedagogies may not be used, but in my research, I have not encountered educational practices that would go beyond the above towards problematizing the relationship between knowledge, learning, and experience – thereby approaching Grey et al.’s (1996) ideal-typical critical approach. Let alone, further possibilities concerning a re-evaluation of hierarchies and the source of knowledge, re-shaping how students are examined, or abandoning the lecture plus seminar format (Reynolds, 1999; Choo, 2007).

As Grey et al. (1996: 102, see also Grey, 2002: 506) assert, “to teach a critical management studies course in a conventional mode of pedagogy is a contradiction in terms”. And Joshua alludes to this in the opening quote when he mentions Grey’s work and says that students should not be informed but be part of a discussion. But it is somewhat alarming that when students don’t seem to grasp the relevance of commodity fetishism, he just says, “well, you’re wrong”. I believe it is important to be open about one’s political and ethical position as an educator. However, such an open negation of the student’s position might signal the replacement of one set of “non-critical” knowledge with “critical” knowledge – without a fundamental change in the transmission model (Ford and Harding, 2007). CME, after all, “is all about good teaching” (Charlie). This does not need some new methodology; it only requires one to be an entertaining lecturer or an engaging seminar tutor. But as Reynolds says, without such a change in educational approach, the “students for their part assimilate received – if critical – wisdom while subordinating themselves to an educational setting they have played no part in constructing or managing” (1997: 318). In a critical

pedagogical approach, students should be recast as scholars who are as much producers of knowledge as are more established members of the university (Neary and Winn, 2009). They could then participate in research, partake in designing the learning environment, and assume responsibility for creating academic value. Boje and Al Arkoubi (2009: 117) thus propose to reframe teaching and learning as “dialogic inquiry”.

Part of the educational process, not designed by students either, is the learning environment. Given the above, this is a source of critique in itself that transmits particular values and beliefs of the organization without explicit planned interaction with the students. FUSO’s hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1971) materializes its values in the form of events, displays, etc. that also matter. Although classes take place all over campus, if one wanders into FUSO’s main building – and diverts from the paths that lead to the lecture theatres –, a strange world of critique awaits. Corridors have displays with publications by staff members, ranging from critical marketing to a paper on vampire-capital that feeds on labour. FUSO’s blog site, which is publicized in some teaching related materials as suggested readings, includes entries on anarchism, sustainability in the food industry, responsible management education, and an argument for higher taxes, amongst others. Stickers supporting the UCU and cartoons caricaturing managers are stuck on doors. And then there was the book launch I described in the previous section. Critique in a variety of topics abounds but it is arguable how much of this is actually visible and perceptible to the average undergraduate (or master’s) student.

Some students are admittedly influenced by the topics and the learning environment. In a module on qualitative methodology students engaged with the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), an UN-led initiative to favour responsibility and sustainability in business schools. A group of these students set up a food allotment on campus with support from one of their lecturers. Other staff members are also thinking of how the project can be broadened and furthered – but at the moment this remains an extracurricular activity supported, and capitalized on, by both FUSO and Flatshire University. Another student-led idea of creating quality circles with a similar focus on sustainability has run a successful course, e.g. in decreasing heat loss of certain buildings on campus. But with the two years of allocated funding running out the future of the project is in question. It is also important to note that these initiatives were suggested by the students who were, understandably, partly also driven by the potential benefits to their CVs and employability in their chosen field or work. Additionally, a much more embedded relationship could be achieved with the inclusion of similar programmes into teaching

methodology itself. As a student participating in my research expressed, “I think the whole PRME document needs to be implemented more, I don’t see why the [School] didn’t really show what it is in the first introduction lectures of each year” (Zac). It wasn’t, I could respond virtually, because the School’s model (and its relationship to PRME) is not considered publicly, nor is its implementation in the different modules.

Yet, there are a great number of modules that are explicit about their critical orientation. This includes most compulsory modules across the 3 years of undergraduate education and several optional choices. Staff members, as I have mentioned before, told me about the dilution of criticality they perceived due to the growth of the School. Admittedly, some newer staff members don’t know where the School’s model originates from and what that entailed for the people present in a small department. At the same time, the lack of discussion on public forums contributes to the reinforcement of this division. A division that may be further reinforced by a corresponding movement to growth – namely, a reinvigorated concentration around critical or heterodox approaches to management education in some modules. This includes some of the finance and accounting modules too, that some of my respondents considered too numerous or too powerful. A new undergraduate programme in finance and management had just started when my research came to a conclusion, therefore it would be hard to say anything about the changes it may bring. At meetings and on corridors people not involved with the programme, or indeed not members of the Finance Group, expressed their anxiety of a possible new power imbalance. Still, several modules in accounting build on social science insights in examining questions of control, subjectivity, etc. In finance, staff members working on the margins of the finance mainstream conduct research, which is harder to reflect in their teaching.

In particular, a first year module on academic skills (including reading, argumentation, writing, rhetoric, knowledge creation) that I observed attempted to move away from academic conventions towards a critical pedagogical approach. The four-member teaching team devised the module together and co-taught some, though not all, parts of it. Lectures included the consequences of shabby referencing leading to the war in Iraq, Freire’s educational philosophy, rhetoric from Aristotle to hip-hop, and a brief history of epistemology in Descartes, Hume and Kant. Clearly, not a conventional academic skills module. Seminars, taught by doctoral students to the roughly 300 first-year undergraduates, were dedicated to group work towards the assignments. The structure of the module thus conformed to other modules in the students’ curricula and retained the classic lectures-and-seminars format as well as the traditional power relations between tutors (full-time staff and

PhDs) and between tutors and students. In this sense, again, it aimed at a careful selection of topics based on the expert knowledge of the four module leaders and engaging, “good teaching”.

A variety of institutional constraints limited what this module could achieve in terms of process. The trade-off for having small groups for all students was a limited number of four seminar meetings each semester. These meetings in turn were devoted to broad discussions around the assessments because that was the area where the module could mostly divert from conventions. Students had to select their own topic – a “knowledge claim”, later renamed “pitch” to emphasize its “relevance” to students’ future careers – to write an argumentative paper about and present in groups. Later, and this is the more unconventional part, they had to engage with external stakeholders for whom this knowledge claim may be important in whatever way they deemed adequate. Finally, they were asked to reflect on their learning individually. But the institutional constraints often didn’t provide enough time to discuss what is at stake in choosing a knowledge claim for the group, what makes a good claim, and how students could engage with the stakeholders. Consequently, they often ended up with claims like “an iPhone is better than a Samsung Galaxy” and asked other students for their opinion. To reflect on the way they created that knowledge and how they came to the conclusion that an objective answer to their own claim exists, was beyond what could be expected from most students *given the circumstances* of the teaching process.

Recognizing these constraints, a year after the module was introduced, students were offered a long list of potential knowledge claims to choose from. Against the best original intentions, the module had to step back towards something more traditional, largely due to the institutional constraints outlined above. It is also possible that tutors would have benefitted from some guidance or discussion facilitated by someone who has run similar courses in the past, in the field of management or otherwise. Besides, it is certainly a challenge to run courses building on critical pedagogical foundations isolated, when almost all other modules are run using traditional teaching methods, even if they are conceptually critical in selecting topics and readings. Years later, students I interviewed still didn’t understand what this module was about and often described it as unclear or disorganized. They would also have needed more guidance: discussions around the social importance of knowledge construction, engagement with their own role in that process, to then become sensitive to how those other stakeholders are implicated in the process and what is at stake in general.

While “[FUSO] has always delivered fairly good teaching” (Aidan) in conventional terms, it is a question what the School wants to achieve through teaching: what models, what

alternatives for organizing society differently, and business and management within it and what School members want to think about together with the students. These questions don't demand a unified answer but rather that there are discussions about how learning, in alternative ways and about alternatives, can be facilitated. At the moment it indeed "has become clear [and empirically explored in my research] that the requirement for CMS in terms of teaching is the introduction of critical ideas to students and not [as for CME it might be] the achievement of critical outcomes in the classroom" (Perriton and Singh, 2016: 83).

7.5. Conclusion

Based on Giroux (1981), Reynolds (1997) discusses how "content-focused radicals" introduce unorthodox readings and theories into the curriculum and "strategy-based radicals" in turn employ radically different methods (like problem-based learning) but rarely question the knowledges they make students understand so well. Critical (management) pedagogy would necessitate a combination of the two approaches. In my analysis, content-focus dominates by far. Maybe not surprisingly, this resembles the types of critique discussed in Chapter 5. It is structured along an analytical interest in critiquing social relations and practices versus a more embodied involvement with one's critique.

This may partly be due to an occupational hazard. Academics tend to function as researchers who get excited about perceiving events around them in different light and taking an analytical interest in theorizing them. They may be people of the mind who do critique in their heads. Consequently, as some of my participants' remarks attest, they want to teach their students how to think in a similar fashion – academically. Once the framework of allegedly open and equal discussion is created, content (ideas and arguments) takes precedence over method. As Perriton and Singh (2016: 80) argue, "CMS was – and remains – a project that is concerned with creating space for critical content and research agendas within the business school – and that includes the classroom space – rather than being focused on pedagogical innovation per se".

But if this is a form of academic habitus, that also gets conditioned by the structure of academia today. If students internalize the discourse of employability, and demand that their modules be relevant in the immediate business sense, then introducing critical approaches to management in their curriculum is already in itself a mildly radical act. The TEF, if ever introduced in its currently proposed form, will likely exacerbate this problem

by using student satisfaction as a key criterion. Yet, we could find a glimmer of hope in the fact that some students I talked to appreciate the opportunity to and understand the implications of studying management differently, however fragile that difference may be at the moment.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION:

TOWARDS REARTICULATION

8.1. What have I done?!

It is time that I turn to the question of what I have done before making a few suggestions about what I think should be done in the future. My research itself is performatively articulated as it brings together particular social practices, discourses, narratives, and materialities. I believe (likely not very surprisingly to those who have done a PhD on a sensitive topic) the question in the title above, the question of performativity, during my research has often taken on a reflexive yet knee-jerk exclamation mark: What have I done?! I clearly remember being struck by this question during a discussion with my supervisors. Having talked about my latest piece of writing at that point, one of them just casually added: “Well, after all you’re writing the history of CMS at [these three schools]”. I remember being disturbed by this sentence, uttered in the middle of an hour-long conversation, for days. Apparently it still haunts me. Not that it is me who writes, that it is about CMS, or that I researched these schools – but the definitiveness of *the* “the”.

I am aware that my thesis could produce this effect. This, however, is only one possible history of the present; one that I hope will be judged by the effects it generates. It does, as I discussed in Chapter 2 building on Clifford’s work, make a claim to presenting a partial truth, the partiality of which is precisely what makes it realist. Being partial is to some extent a necessary consequence of doing any social research, and I address some of the “limitations” of this research below. Naturally, my particular take on this research is already represented in the particular research question I asked: How is a critically-oriented school of business and management articulated? This main question was complemented by four additional questions: (1) In what national and organizational contexts can business and

management schools emerge as critical? (2) What are the discourses in which identification as critical becomes intelligible, where its conditions of existence become fashionable? (3) How do the contexts they participate in maintaining enable and constrain the practices at self-identified critically-oriented schools of business management? (4) Where is the continuing struggle Clifford points to that determines the tactical meaning of “critical”?

Below I summarize how far I have gone in answering these questions in the individual chapters to complete the first moment of Grossberg’s analytical approach of demonstrating the contexts that are articulated together for critically-oriented schools of business and management, and thus that the world does not necessarily have to be the way it actually is. Grossberg (2010: 25) then goes on to claim, “*Cultural studies is not supposed to rediscover what we already know*. That is why it is only at the end that one can raise the critical questions of politics, why politics and strategy are only available after the work of cultural studies”. Knowing the limitations and main findings will allow me to discuss the contributions of this research – some of which we may not have known before or have not seen in this light. In the last instance, I turn to the question of politics, suggesting one particular way of rearticulation, primarily a renewed affirmation of CME.

Framing the findings

To answer the questions above, I had to make some decisions that have resulted in particular limitations of this research. As I said in Chapter 3, it is in making these choices where my responsibility as a researcher lies. Besides the theoretical choices outlined in the Introduction and methodological ones discussed in Chapter 3, there are two additional major limitations I briefly want to address here – accepting the neoliberalism in higher education thesis and generalizing from this research.

I had to make the decision early on to set as a parameter to this research accepting the common argument in literature on higher education in the UK as well as the US and some other countries that neoliberal policies increasingly encroach the sector. As a backdrop to the whole thesis, though the literature is presented in Chapter 4, some concerns may be raised as neoliberalism is far from being a clear concept. It has been described as an emptied out concept (Flew, 2014) used to express an alleged orchestrated political transformation since the 1980s (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009) or rather a much older colonizing developmental programme (Connell and Dados, 2014), possibly coupled with a transformation of subjectivities and relating to the world (Foucault, 2008). Although my

research shows that critical management scholars are implicated in this neoliberal framework, which is indeed shown to be a condition of existence of critically-oriented business schools, my research can only make this important claim very hesitantly and with regard to the very specific empirical context. More research would allow for fuller conjunctural analysis (Grossberg, 2010) regarding the articulation of neoliberalism itself and the different ways (management) academia participates in (re)constructing it as a context.

The second limitation follows from the impossibility, even when undertaking a sort of ethnography, to engage with every process, custom, phenomenon and person in the field. Therefore, it would be valuable to go back and talk to people who I did not have the time to meet or to conduct similar research at other institutions in the UK and elsewhere – in order to further refine and compare my findings. But beyond this general problem, it is very likely that my own implication in the field – the *autoethnographic* element – results in blind spots. My selection of meetings to visit, people to talk to, etc. was based on careful consideration but being trained in doing critical analysis and being affected as a doctoral *student* by events around me, who and what I paid attention to in various situations as a *researcher* has likely influenced my insights. I have tried to account for this throughout the thesis but given the time frame and space of a doctoral research, I believe much of this influence remains hidden. It would be interesting to analyse the data again and the research process reflected in it (cf. Wray-Bliss, 2003), maybe in some years, with an eye set on how my particular insider-outsider position hid certain insights from my sight, though allowing me to think that I was seeing other things more clearly.

Findings of the thesis

It is between these limits that I want to recap the main findings of the thesis. To answer the research questions, I reviewed the literature on articulation as a theory of contexts in Chapter 2, which serves as the theoretical framework for this thesis. Grossberg's idea of radical contextualism underpinned my approach to the empirical material, where my I focused on how particular elements of the social are vested with multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. Each data analysis chapter engaged with a particular context in the articulation of critically-oriented business and management schools. In Chapter 4, I investigated the embedded contexts of higher education in the UK, Flatshire University, and the three schools. Lived realities and their contradictions in the schools and beyond them – in relation with other researchers, topics, and institutions – were the contexts analysed in Chapters 5

and 6, respectively. Finally, the question of what it means to do management education critically was the topic of Chapter 7.

Regarding Questions 1 and 2, I showed in Chapter 4 that many of the discourses in, primarily, FUSO are based on an (imagined) antagonism between University management and staff members' ideas. However, this is mitigated by the conceptualisation of higher education as a market and the university as a business, driven by the regulatory framework in the UK which makes universities see some strategic value in offering management education that is marketable as unique. Chapter 5 highlighted how such a discourse allows contradictions, partly with the outcome of ensuring its hegemony, between different subject positions in the schools. Chapter 6 investigated how the current discourse of CMS, in calling for more engagement, inadvertently reaffirms a notion of critique as a largely academic exercise. This idea was then taken forward in Chapter 7, where I identified the discourses of employability that require a perceived "relevance" reflected in student satisfaction rates and of teaching critically as content-driven, as two additional contexts which make being a critical management educator possible.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the implications of these contexts and discourses of particular practices, in response to Question 3, start with academics and FUSO as a whole making some concessions, what appear to be necessary or are at least referred to as such, to the universities that guarantee a space for criticality. In that space, however, as I showed in Chapter 7, changing the educational content alone to include some topics and literature not usually taught in management education is enough to count as an act of critique. While this is indeed a form of critique, it often appears as the most that can be done and there is very little discussion around different pedagogic methods. This is also a consequence of critique being mostly disembodied, as I showed in Chapter 6. At the same time, a very embodied feeling of being out of place results invariably in a distanciation from belonging, or in an uncomfortable belonging, that keeps critique alive – and, as I showed in Chapter 5, that is expressed in a variety of subject positions.

Finally, Question 4 asked about the specific tactical alliances that are made and unmade in the struggles across the terrain of management education, which connects back to all of the previous questions. For instance, while generally antagonistic, I showed how it fits a diversification-oriented strategic approach to offer management education with a distinct character at FUSO or how a smaller (research) unit can fit into a pluralistic offering that covers a wide range of approaches. At the same time, such strategic approaches by universities give CMS scholars a mandate. Thus, in the struggle to make management

scholarship more heterodox, a surprising alliance is forged. Similarly, in exploring the possibilities of open access to publications – at least the ones submitted to the REF, staff at FUSO have worked closely with the University Library, and in accordance with emerging national regulations. As critical takes on a different meaning, which produces different tactics, for instance, for the internal critics, as I presented in Chapter 5, a more fundamental critique of capitalist work organization may be articulated together with a recognition of antagonism between espoused and enacted values.

Contributions

These findings contribute to an area that, I have been told by one of my supervisors and some interview participants, many CMS scholars thought should be extended but there seems to have been an aversion, a sort of anxiety around actually doing research at our own schools and with our students. Having looked at how critically-oriented schools of business and management are organized therefore contributes to management studies in general. In particular, it adds to the extant literature in CMS – both at a conceptual level of understanding this particular field of scholarly activity and as a study of select specific organizations. It is likely to be of interest to CME too, in particular the insights of Chapter 7 that make a tentative contribution by highlighting the lack of serious engagement with methodological aspects of pedagogy, which should not be treated as separate from the content of education. That undergraduate students, who have not been given extensive attention in CME research despite spending the most time studying at our schools, mostly approach their education rather pragmatically, makes this finding particularly important.

The research proceeded by making the case for conducting a contrastive case study, as discussed in Chapter 3. Not used widely before in organization or education research, this setup allowed me to retain some element of comparative case studies, which would reveal any striking difference between the three sites, while at the same time being able to conduct extensive fieldwork in one institution. Choosing critically-oriented schools for the case study also approaches the question of articulation in an unusual way inasmuch as I did not start with a social phenomenon that is widely considered problematic to be then investigated as the articulation of several intersecting larger contexts. For instance, in the classic work of the CCCS, *Policing the Crisis* (Hall, et al., 1978), the analysis proceeds by questioning why mugging becomes articulated by politicians and the media as the representative act of social decay. Rather, I started off with what could be considered a “solution” offered (and implemented)

for the problem of highly practice and business impact oriented nature of management education. In this sense, my research puts articulation theory into a new context, where its aim is not primarily to reveal how the hegemonic articulation is maintained by the powerful elite but – as Grossberg would argue – mapping the complexity of reality to see how the powerful and the powerless act together, even if antagonistically, to create a social context in which a “problem” becomes a problem, or a “solution” becomes a solution.

The use of a cultural studies-based articulation theory has proved useful for analysing a particular aspect of the institutionalization of CMS – critically-oriented schools of business and management. Understanding articulation as a conflation of different contexts that each assume a meaning by virtue of being separate from other contexts, I was able to trace how the category of the critical school and the critical scholar are created actively performing their own constitutive outsides. A critically-oriented school of business and management points in many ways to the increasing neoliberal agenda in higher education, in which such an articulation comes to make sense at all. But beyond that, my research shows how “external” contexts, where the externality of these has to be understood as dynamically changing depending on which context we focus on, are sustained performatively. That is, this research provides an empirical study of how double articulation happens in critically-oriented business and management schools. For instance, my thesis confirms that neoliberalism is indeed not “out there” as an independent context but is continually sustained by my respondents’ own investment into using the concepts of this context (even if with an often unvoiced critical distance), into capitalizing on its resources for individual ends, and into maintaining a collective identity. My findings in the previous section show similar practices with regard to the university, public or business engagement, or treating students as consumers.

My research also brought to the surface the negotiated contextual aspect of what criticality means and how it is sustained in the business schools I investigated. This insight furthers the line of investigation present in CMS about the negotiated nature of critique and the contradictions in sustaining one’s identity as a critical management scholar. Critique by definition relies on an object that the critic, in an effort similar to the expert but with the opposite emotional-theoretical engagement, has a vested interest in keeping alive. Critique has to re-iterate, and thereby performatively articulate, the thing it criticizes. What my research adds to such claims, through the empirical application of articulation theory as outlined by Clifford (2013), is that such performative articulations are not stable. Critique precisely becomes contextual; it starts to make sense in reaction not to a general, idealized and distanced, context but to the actual context in which it happens. A critical school of

management is part of the same reality that produces the problem it is a reaction to and that posits it as a problematic institution. Articulation performs, reiterates the context in which it occurs while at the same time it re-shapes the configuration of material relations, practices, discourses, and affects – thereby creating the conditions of possibility for something else, something new to occur. How I imagine this happens, what new political strategies open up by implication of this research, is the final question I want to address in the next section. I advocate focusing on this articulation of a (critical) school of organizing and changing our own practices first to provide a first-hand experience of how that actually may work.

8.2. Critique, politics, cynicism

After highlighting what we have learnt from the empirical investigation, we are left with the need to discuss the implications of this research for a political engagement with these contexts in this section. My argument here extends the discussion of critical performativity at the end of Chapter 6 to the question of management education. Interestingly, the issue of management education is already introduced in the paper by Fournier and Grey (2000) that often in a for or against performativity fashion (for an exception see Parker and Parker [forthcoming]) serves as the starting point signalled out for engaging with performativity in organization studies. I believe partly the reason for such a simplified for or against stance is the confusion of terms addressed by Cabantous et al. (2016) who entangle the relationship between the Lyotardian (1986) meaning of performativity, Butler's (2010) understanding of the term, and its use in science and technology studies exemplified in the works of Callon (2010). I will describe how I understand the term below before turning to the issue of politics in CME.

As a starting point, Butler (2000: 32) says of how sadomasochism comes to life:

The acts performed are not radically sequestered from the larger economic and legal context in which they are performed, and there is a way, significantly, that that context is *also* performed precisely through the sexual acts themselves. Hence, the self is not produced *ex nihilo*, and the “stylization” of the subject under such conditions is not itself radically voluntaristic self-invention, but a negotiation of patrolled urban space, of the public circumscription of sexuality, of the place and meaning of consent, freedom of association, and the pursuit of pleasure not over and against its constituting limits, but a pursuit for which limits become the condition of eroticization itself. In other words, it is not as if the ready-made subject meets its limits in the law, but that the limits that the law sets decide in advance what will and will not become a subject. Sadomasochistic practice might then illustrate the way in which erotic constraints operate as the condition of possibility for sexual agency. This ‘limit’ is not a static foreclosure, a boundary that is in place and known once

and for all, but precisely that which is worked (made to resignify and reverse its usual meanings, parody itself, display its own impossibility) and in being worked, becomes the occasion for eroticization.

Along these lines the critical management scholar's practices both take form in and sustain their conditions of possibility. These practices do not appear as if from nowhere, they are citations, reiterations of previous practices – patterns of thinking, engaging with academic canons, using particular teaching methods, striking for fair pay, using four-letter words, etc. As reiterations, these practices are never exactly the same and, consequently, they also morph, however infinitesimally, the contexts they nevertheless sustain. But it is the seeming fixedness of the boundary at any single time (between critical and mainstream, business school and university, home and outsider, content and method, academia and general public, etc.) that allows for criticality to at once maintain and question that boundary. Cooper and Law (1995) already argue that an organization performs itself, inasmuch as it is the effect of organizing practices that bring together sociomaterial elements – human and nonhuman actors, artefacts, systems, numbers, buildings, etc. They claim that organization theory has been a distal theory of organizations (in the plural) that aims to find out how distinct institutions function and can do so “better” while it forgets about those processes that effect a perception of such distinct bodies. A proximal theory of organization (in the singular), or as they recast it, of organizing, would draw attention to these processes and the networks that make them happen.

In Butlerian terms, there is no organization before the performance of organizing; it is the citation of organizing practices that produces the sensation of *an* organization. In this sense then, performativity is always at play, the question rather is how close actors get to reiterating previous practices that, in our case, maintain the organization. Consequently, it is not the particular practice that can be felicitous or infelicitous but rather its reiteration of the norm. As Derrida (1982) argues, every utterance has a performative element, only that this character loses its prominence as we get used to particular utterances over time. Most things we say are felicitous in (re-)creating our reality because we do not question who performs the act, for what audience, and with what intentions. Repeat performances thus make social practices appear as immutable structure; the separate, the distal takes prominence (Cooper and Law, 1995).

What a theory of articulation, understood as a theory of contexts (Grossberg, 2010, 2013, and see Chapter 2), can add to the above is that at any single point in time and place there are multiple contexts that one performs. Besides, each performance acquires its meaning through the creation of (semiotic) differences – not one non-static “limit” that

determines what becomes (un)intelligible but intersecting limits. Butler's concept of performativity read through the theory of articulation becomes localized. Thus, what Hall calls the tendential forces, the "limits" as quoted from Butler, are mapped through the local, the empirical in my study. Two consequences follow. First, if boundaries are performative, then attempts to highlight how they are kept in place will lead to a better understanding of the organizations we inhabit. But of course this is not enough. As Barad (2003) argues, agency is not a capacity but it is formed in the interactions between subjects and matter. Tendential forces, effected boundaries, organizations have very real material effects. Therefore, recognition of these boundary-practices does not directly result in change but it still seems to me to provide a necessary basis for conversation about political steps to be taken for their rearticulation. Part of the contributions of this thesis, as discussed earlier, is a detailed presentation of the forms these practices take in some critically-oriented schools.

Second, the way limits are articulated is a question in itself. Mahmood (2005) argues that Butler's project is politically motivated in that it prefigures a liberal democratic society. Her crucial reason for showing that gender is performative is to be able to reveal, and sometimes actively interject, the instability of the heteronormative matrix of sex, gender and sexuality. That is, continues Mahmood (2005), Butler – in the performativity of her writing but not her espoused theory – postulates agency as existing only on one side of a binary between subjectivation by (i.e. not having agency) or subversion of (i.e. having agency) the norm. Mahmood highlights that "[n]orms are not only consolidated and/or subverted [...] but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways" (Mahmood, 2005: 22). Performative agency in this formulation sometimes contradicts western feminist assumptions about achieving individual freedom as the arch goal of emancipatory politics, which Mahmood attributes to Butler's embeddedness into a political fight against heteronormativity where challenging and subverting norms is clearly seen in a positive light.

Building on her research of the women's mosque movement in Egypt, participants of which set up communities in mosques to educate people how to live according to Muslim norms, Mahmood gives the example of a woman, Abir, who disobeys her husband, who she is traditionally subjected to, to participate more fully in the religious movement in the mosques.

Paradoxically, Abir's ability to break from the norms of what it meant to be a dutiful wife were predicated upon her learning to perfect a tradition that accorded her a subordinate status to her husband. Abir's divergence from approved standards of wifely conduct, therefore, did not represent a break with the signficatory system of Islamic norms, but was saturated with them, and enabled by the capacities that the practice of these norms endowed her with. (Mahmood, 2005: 179)

Inhabiting, reiterating certain (religious) norms thus opens up such embodied political possibilities that otherwise would not be available to her. In terms of articulation, this means that being embedded in multiple contexts at the same time, the boundaries of the organization are multiplied too and resistance to particular norms may mean complying with norms sustained in other contexts. Furthermore, it is one's embeddedness in different contexts that makes it possible to inhabit norms differentially. There are two additional implications. One is that organizational boundaries are rather porous as organizing practices perform multiple contexts, multiple organizations. Second, that these already organized organizing practices, i.e. organizations, produce very material effects. Organizations are a form of those "limits" (Butler, 200), "tendential forces" (Hall in Grossberg, 1986), the ideologies that result from discursive practices (Purvis and Hunt, 1993), "politics made durable" (Parker et al., 2017), which are inhabited and worked, resisted and parodied.

"Critical performativity" (Spicer et al., 2009; 2016) starts out with the belief that one does not necessarily become a sell-out if they don't resist everything in the world of management and that professional relevance – not instead of but besides academic rigour – is indeed important. It focuses on intentional acts of conscious "politics of parody" (Butler, 1990), which should provide revealing flashes of how organizational and managerial practices are constituted performatively. And unlike Butler's early work that was often criticized for not paying enough attention to the context in which parody can occur, it also recognizes that audiences matter. Some audiences react better, some worse; some understand the irony, others take the act at face value, miss the double tongue, and react forcefully (hence the encouragement in Spicer et al. [2016] to attempt to make coalitions with powerful but disgruntled elites). Mahmood (2005) advocates the importance of understanding our respondents' agency to inhabit norms, reinforcing certain fundamental ones while challenging others, and exercising their personal politics in mostly rather "conservative" (business) settings. She hopes to show "that analysis as a mode of conversation, rather than mastery, can yield a vision of coexistence that does not require making others [*sic*] lifeworlds extinct or provisional" (Mahmood, 2005: 199). As a longstanding feminist concern regarding giving voice to and imposing the researcher's politics on our respondents (see Wray-Bliss, 2003), such an approach is hardly compatible with the intentional subversive engagement (e.g. microemancipations) that Spicer et al. (2009; 2016) promote.

In the following sections, to conclude this thesis, I want to tentatively relate these two consequences to a potential politics of management education. Mahmood's work suggests that people, including management academics, already engage in all sorts of

performative practices that constitute their politics. Therefore, we as researchers might want to understand their actions and motivations in their own context before proposing any kind of engagement as if we knew better. Equipped with all knowledge of business schools as management academics and given the wealth of research already done, including this thesis, we are in a good and ethically tenable position to consider what goes on under the label of politics in our own workplaces. I outline some of my considerations in the next section. But I have also argued that Butler's work shows that iterations may fail, thus opening up some space for changing organizational boundaries and practices. I discuss how I think this process may be facilitated through management education in the section afterwards.

Embodied resistance

Regardless whether we call it CMS or renounce that label, most scholars working on topics related to organizational inequalities share the institutional space of academia. Without assuming that the "we" is a singular and universal category (as I showed in Chapters 5 and 6), this is one of the contexts in which we all exist (see Chapter 4). I propose, as a modest call for action, that we engage with this shared context because this is where the performativity of our own practices (research, teaching, administration, etc.) potentially has the biggest effect. It is indeed "curious" (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016: 268) that proponents of critical performativity have not paid extensive attention to their own immediate working environments, which could include "calls for open access publication platforms and 'REF boycotts'" (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016: 269) as means of change. Similarly, Cabantous et al. (2016: 210) suggest in their conclusion that

Perhaps we should start by exploring our own unfathomable acquiescence in the increasing managerialism of the academy. How could a political organizational theory of performativity account for the supine academic who talks about action but spurns it on his/her own door-step? How could such a theory help us engage in changing the terms through which we constitute the academy and ourselves as academics?

We could use existing networks and relations (Chapter 6) to discuss studies in which the performativity of critical scholars becomes painfully obvious. For instance, why the academics described by Parker (2014) at Euro Business School decided in great numbers to quit when they were faced with Hirschman's (1970) dilemma of exit, voice, or loyalty. Is it realistic for critically-oriented management scholars to expect that their respondents will rather put up a fight than flee their workplace? And what about those – members of the academic precariat – who cannot leave? Such arguments are not new, political organizations

(Sotiris, 2014), new social movements (Bircham and Charlton, 2001), CMS (Reedy, 2008), and doctoral students (Prasad, 2016) have all been called to act in line with the alternative world they imagine, or at least face why this is impossible. Here I want to put this common call into the frame of this thesis.

If it is increasingly difficult to find time for activism outside of academia (do Mar Pereira, 2016), we might want to think of ways of exercising activism within. As the discourse of impact, with its emphasis on economic returns and/or policy influence, pervades academia, it may be time to shift away from the idea of creating concentrated hubs of critical scholars suited for a time when publishing much was enough to becoming more dispersed and relying on organized networks. There already exists some excellent bases to build on. The journal ranking list of the Association of Business Schools has been shown to act as a metric for performance management through the REF and to privilege orthodox journals, topics and approaches to scholarship (Tourish and Willmott, 2015; Willmott, 2011). This is coupled with research on the academic journal publishing industry that highlights how the above average return incumbent firms enjoy in this market is based on a business model that exploits academics' free labour and taxpayers money to provide pedigree while hiding the knowledge published behind paywalls (Beverungen, Bohm and Land, 2012; Harvie et al., 2012, 2013). These arguments have certainly intensified the discussion around the politics of publishing in recent years. There have been calls for compiling a list of publishers to boycott and to work with – although I have no knowledge of these lists having been published anywhere. Some editorial boards and individual members have resigned (notably *Organization and Environment* in the field of management) but the repeated discussions have prompted an outspoken CMS academic to use the subject line, “Librarians take action while Critter’s critics whinge...”.⁴² Whinging, to use this term, both about (other) critters and by them serves a special purpose here though.

As Butler and Spoelstra (2012) argue, even prominent CMS academics serving as journal editors end up recreating this publication system. Moreover, their critical-cynical attitude towards the idea of “excellence”, as measured by outputs, appears to act as a sort of pink cloud that blurs their own implication in the system. This is precisely how norms come not to be repressed, subverted, or followed – but rather inhabited. Different norms, at the same time, in a variety of ways. This inhabitation is also performative in the sense of

⁴²See <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=CRITICAL-MANAGEMENT;a3123fbc1211>, <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=CRITICAL-MANAGEMENT;26415586.1211>, and <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=CRITICAL-MANAGEMENT;c8378992.1303>, respectively.

(re)producing the effects of a having a context of excellence that scholars often find inescapable as well as effecting a rather cynical identity. Sophie, for instance, drew my attention to the curious custom of many FUSO academic members – but prominently various senior managers – of using irony and sarcastic comments in their email communication. She highlighted how strange it is that they feel comfortable communicating this way to and about the university, even though there is not so much difference between FUSO and the previous reputable university she used to work at.

WEEKEND FOOTBALL

That[FUSO]Live Score Feed in Full...

Pre-Match Commentary

John Motson: Welcome everyone to this exciting fixture between [FUSO] and Real Madrid. Team news, just in:

[FUSO] were due to line-up in a 4-3-2-1 formation. However, due to 1* & 2* work no longer being funded by HEFCE, the manager has taken the unusual decision to field only seven players. Two impact case-studies, who were expected to make the subs bench, were dropped after a late fitness test.

In a tactical decision that might be considered dismissive, Real have decided to rest Messi, Bale, Benzema, Xabi Alonso, Sergio Ramos, and most of the rest of the first, second, and third team squads. Over to you, Alan.

Hansen: This fixture, of course, represents[FUSO]'s first foray into international competition having just been accredited by UEFA and AMBA. Controversially, they were originally drawn in, group C, alongside Economics, but were switched to group D for political reasons.

Kick-Off

GOAL: (2 Mins)

Motson: Enrique punts the ball goalwards. █████ controls it well. But wait – he's gone and put it in his own net! Complete anarchism at the back!

Hansen: Terrible, terrible...

[FUSO] CHANCE: (6 Mins)

Motson: Good chance here for[FUSO]. █████ on the left-wing, crosses the ball into the box, it drops low – but no-one's there to put a foot on it. What do you make of that, Alan?

Hansen: [Sighs] Well. Complete confusion in the box there. It's like the team have no idea who's supposed to be doing what.

Further goals for Real follow...

Motson: Well, 4-1 down here at █████ Road. Alan, what do you think the problems are with this squad?

Hansen: Hard to say, John. I was watching them down at the training ground on Wednesday afternoon. Most of the training seemed to consist of lectures on finance and accounting. Of course, money's an important part of the modern game, but a lot of the squad looked plain bored.

Figure 8.1a "Weekend Football" pamphlet (page one, redacted)

In March 2014, halfway between submission and publication of the results of REF2014, all full-time academic staff members found a satire in their mailboxes (Figure 8.1). The author of the pamphlet is still unknown – to me at least. But plenty of speculation has circulated about who knows football and who would have the tone, the intention, and the satirical insights to write something like this. Clearly, most of this piece is aimed at the senior management of FUSO and their decisions at the time (e.g. the EQUIS accreditation mentioned in Chapter 4), apparently leading to disorganization. It also contains a School-level reflection on the (political) identity differences with the Economics department, the lack of appreciation for finance, or that not much has been done to tackle gender inequality.

Half Time

Motson: Slight delay in restarting the match here. Bizarrely, one of the [FUSO] players came out of the dressing room with his shorts around his ankles.

Second Half

Tactical Problems (65 Mins)

Motson: [FUSO] brought on EQUIS at half time, in the hope of reviving things. But it doesn't seem to have worked.

Hansen: No. Suddenly the striker's found himself at left-back, the midfield have been asked not to go anywhere outside the middle third of the pitch, and the team as a whole seem not to have played with EQUIS before. Frankly, he's causing chaos.

Motson: And what about the suggestion that systems' thinking is the tactical equivalent of the genius that was Don Howe, Terry Venable's assistant in Euro '96?

Hansen: Bald and working under dubious authority?

[FUSO] Substitution (79 minutes to the results of REF 2014)

Motson: Some confusion down on the touch-line. We thought we were going to see a substitution. Instead there seems to be a little bit of panic in the dug-out.

Hansen: I don't believe what I'm seeing here. It looks like the [FUSO] players aren't being substituted – they're just coming off and joining other teams!

Full-Time

The fixture finishes 6-1 to Real. Recriminations follow. The manager accuses the owner of being the academic equivalent of Vincent Tan. The owner threatens the players with 'stewarding only' contracts. The players blame the ground-staff for providing an un-level playing field. The [FUSO] star striker kung-fu kicks a Crystal Palace fan; meanwhile after a rush of blood to the head the No. 6 gives the Vice-Chancellor the full Benito Carbone.

Fixture News: Cancellation

Tomorrow night's fixture, featuring the [FUSO] Women's XI, has been cancelled due to a lack of players.

Figure 8.1b “Weekend Football” pamphlet (page two, redacted)

At an even broader level, it also echoes a broader sense of discontent with, for instance, having to produce impact case studies, or Flatshire University threatening to revert “underperforming” academics to teaching only contracts. The allusion to not putting up proper resistance but rather exiting the organization, however, raises the question to what extent this leaflet can be considered resistance.⁴³

This cynicism is reproduced, not very surprisingly, by early career academics. One might say, writing this dissertation is a cynical endeavour itself inasmuch as through it I partly aim to create a cynical distance between where I stand and “what goes on” amongst critical management academics (see more in the next section). I have also been told by junior staff at Flatshire in corridor talks that they do not feel supported at all in mounting any form of resistance to the publishing frenzy. Actions are individualized if they happen at all – someone stepping down as editor or not doing peer reviews or submitting (often different versions of the same article) to lower ranked and/or open access journals. Given that performance review and the threat of punishment is individualized too, this form of resistance nicely fits into the current performance management systems in universities. Not only are role models missing, there is also a perceived lack of common action or even a lack of consideration of early career academics’ more vulnerable circumstances. I want to suggest, however, that although these concerns are very real, they already exhibit the same cynical attitude in its infancy that is so inherent to (most) CMS scholars’ identities. The idea that we have to play along as junior scholars and that there will be a future point in time when we can afford to stand up against the system inhibits individual and collective action from the beginning. Cynicism becomes the only escape route that seems to lead to a better world.

Contu (2008) argues that such resistance, that thrives on cynicism, is “decaf”. It is not enough and not real, because it is “without a cost” (Contu, 2008: 350) given that it “pose[s] no threat to the system that supports them [acts of resistance] and makes them possible in the first instance (and most important, vice versa)” (Contu, 2008: 349). As such, cynicism as an act of resistance does not, moreover cannot, demand the impossible because it recreates the system it criticizes as its constitutive other. Fleming and Spicer (2003) trace what they dub the “ideology approach to cynicism”, which in its strong form would argue that being cynical is actually a form of transgression that preserves the status quo by diverting resistance from tackling the fundamental issues of power relations. Yet, given that we are

⁴³Another potential reading that I was suggested by a staff member at FUSO, is that this could be a “reactionary” attack on CMS disguised as an attack on the mismanagement of the School. The two readings reiterate the positions of the internal critic in Chapter 5, who might have a problem with either how CMS is practiced at FUSO, or with some foundational ideas of CMS more broadly.

already invested in “a certain libidinal economy [...] that domesticates enjoyment by commanding, directing, forbidding it” (Contu, 2008: 376), it remains unclear to me where “outrageous breaks with all that seem reasonable and acceptable in our liberal postmodern world” (Contu, 2008: 377) will come from. Notice that Contu speaks from a particular position; one where, metaphorically speaking, coffee with caffeine is seen more natural than, and thus is preferred to, decaf.

This is a tempting position to take because just like decaf coffee allows one to avoid the harmful substance *and* makes one forgo the benefit of being more awake, decaf resistance also comes without a cost of disruption and without the benefit of fundamentally changed social relations at the same time. Still, drinking decaf is a performance of enjoying the taste and/or the social aspects of drinking coffee. Acts of cynicism, decaf resistance, as I argued above is performative too. I have argued that resistance, the attempt to subvert certain norms, is necessarily multiple in its various contexts. Neither is it “the practice of a wholly coherent, fully self-aware subject operating from a pristine, authentic space”, nor “of social actors that are subsumed within, and ultimately ineffectual against, a larger system of power relations” (Mumby, 2005: 37). As Mumby (2005: 38) argues,

Transcending this dichotomy [of either an autonomous individual or an oppressive structure] enables the study of resistance as a set of situated discursive and nondiscursive practices that are simultaneously enabling and constraining, coherent and contradictory, complex and simple, efficacious and ineffectual. In this context, social actors are neither romanticized nor viewed as unwitting dupes but rather are seen as engaging in a locally produced, discursive process of self-formation that is always ongoing, always tension filled. This self-formation process involves drawing on larger discourses that are articulated together in ways that may be coherent and contradictory.

It is precisely the differential location of these practices in their various contexts that make them understandable as resistance. What the idea of articulation suggests, to use Grossberg’s (2010) terminology (Chapter 2), is that while cynicism may not be able to reconfigure the milieu, it should certainly count as resistance inasmuch as it can rearticulate the territories, people’s lived realities. Being cynical is a practice that makes us capable of reiterating a critical identity and thus belonging to a group, which might then allow for non-cynical acts of resistance to materialize. The previous chapters may help us better understand who “we” are and who “they” are in the antagonistic identity we usually set up (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). This also means a performative rearticulation of organizational boundaries, where cynical resistance does more than oppose a particular organizational practice – it reinforces an identity as a critical scholar, maintains group belonging across institutions between critical

scholars, marks out a group against Flatshire University policies, and against the senior management of FUSO.

While I agree with Contu (2008) that cynicism is not enough as resistance, it does count though. We should not discount the role it plays in highlighting how powerful discourses are articulated – even if it remains a constituent element of that very same articulation. It is impossible to expect that academics can be either always radically critical, or fail in that and fall back onto being *only* cynical. First, being cynical often does not feel good – neither pleasurable, nor satisfying – when people are all too well aware of what is wrong with their world. The early career academics I talked to were often cynical for they recognized that being radically critical would have been in vain in certain situations. Second, decaf and non-decaf resistance co-exist as forms of resistance. One has to pick what to challenge and what to live by as a complete sudden overhaul of the current (academic) system is unlikely. This will vary according to the person in question, their disposition, their academic tenure, their perceived possibilities, etc. But it does not mean doing nothing or being cynical with regards to any possible act of (caffeinated) resistance. It rather requires an individual *and* common exercise of critical faculties. Individual because some struggles are possible to fight and a critical scholar can be reasonably expected to be able to decide where it seems that advances can be made. But common too, because by different scholars embarking on different acts of resistance – towards which others may have been cynical – recreates them as critical and redefines what resistance is. Fleming and Spicer (2003) also come to the conclusion that besides being a genuinely (though often mildly) disruptive force, like in the case of the pamphlet, cynicism can actually facilitate other forms of further struggle. In this relation, cynicism as a failure of performing resistance opens the possibility of reflecting on what resistance is besides creating a shared platform for doing so amongst the cynics.

It is precisely this “sentient flow” of critique that Ashcraft (2017: 51) draws attention to. She discusses what she sees as the three conventional forms of critique in organization and management studies, specifically with regard to neoliberalism in academia. The first one, termed “vacated criticism”, targets broader structural and systemic developments that bear an impact on what individuals (feel they) can and cannot do. Examples of such “disembodied” analyses include most critiques of encroaching managerialism in academia (e.g. Ball, 2011), journal list fetishism (Willmott, 2011), becoming part of the system (e.g. Butler and Spoelstra, 2012), etc. The second form of critique, what she terms “humanized criticism”, addresses experiences that individuals go through under such conditions, and as

a “confessional tale” narrated by the author is often autoethnographic in nature (e.g. Sparkes, 2007). Finally, the third common form, “reciprocated criticism”, connects the previous two, generalizing on the basis of personal experiences and exemplifying structural constraints using personal stories (e.g. Brewis, 2004; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Prasad, 2013).

Ashcraft (2017) argues that these forms are all similar in that they don’t consider affect. What she calls “inhabited criticism”, pays attention to forms of speaking and writing that arise from and during the everyday, the colloquial, the common to show that these are already inherently more complex than critiques that look for the *extraordinary* would admit. This is a form of critique that appears in the given situation as “a promise in bloom” (Ashcraft 2017: 52), a temporary trajectory that is not evaluated according to what it achieves in terms of critique but rather along the current and future potentials it opens up. She also argues that paying attention to affect and everyday criticism offers a new way of looking at the previous three forms of critique as ones that can arise within the everyday, which become what they are as vacated, humanized or reciprocated critiques in those particular situations.

Such an understanding of inhabitation shows close similarity to the way Mahmood (2004) uses the term, as introduced earlier. People always already inhabit and resist power and norms in a variety of different ways and with differing intensities. Critical scholars should attend to how this happens and, I argue, should do so in contexts that are immediate to us in an embodied sense – i.e. in academia as a primary context in which we write about all those inhabited spaces. Cynicism as I showed above is one such way of inhabiting the current context of academia, which might locally foster the rise of other forms of resistance (as I will go on to show in Section 8.3). As Ashcraft (2017: 52) says, “inhabited criticism may be better equipped to grow embodied habits of resistance that can skip among scenes and sniff out their relation”.

Embodiment in this sense is closer to the idea of “soma” that “incorporates the body’s extensions, such as its desires and ideals, thoughts and attitudes, ideology and love, profession and social life. A human ‘Soma’ is everything that a person is, including how and with whom she or he has relationships” (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 3 cited in Firth 2016: 131). And while the three common “critical practices ‘do’ many vital things, [...] they do not engage with *sociomaterial* inhabitations of power and resistance, nor do they practice criticism *from within* these ongoing inhabitations – that is, by writing-*enacting* rather than writing *about* them” (Ashcraft 2017: 51). This distinction both highlights the importance of understanding writing by scholars as a way of acting in the world but it also retains some of the classic juxtaposition between involved doing (enacting) and detached thinking (writing about).

Embodied resistance, in my understanding, turns around Ashcraft's description of inhabited criticism – it is about enacting-writing. Such a formulation offers a double meaning. It is both writing that enacts, that is a performative act of resistance, and also, importantly, the enactment of our writing. What we do as critical scholars, sometimes through writing and other times through its enactment, can become threatening to the hegemony of any given articulation. Therefore, it can (some might say, should) become dangerous for ourselves. Otherwise, we're hardly worthy of the name – critical scholar.

Enacting-writing does not refer to some distant place, something removed, represented in accounts, etc. but rather happens in one's immediate environment, "place" as context (Grossberg, 2010), embodied and lived. It is personal and dangerously political. It creates immediacy and vulnerability. Because it is lived through and it puts one's own body on the line, it can at any point become a form of parrhesia. Given that the general expectation in academia is rationally reasoned debate, for "activists and *parrhesiastes* [...] breaking with expectations of delivery can amplify the transgressive nature of their *parrhesia*" (Osorio 2017: 153). At the same time, parrhesia can take a toll on the speaker's body – partly because of the threat of external retaliation but also due to the affective intensities of speaking up. And this is so in my view regardless whether it is a "decaf" or "radical" act of resistance.

The pamphlet discussed above, thus, is both an expression of cynicism but it also is an example of embodied critique. Making and distributing it can be understood as an act to go with the sentient flow in the moment. As a sociomaterial object, the pamphlet acquires its (contested and negotiated) criticality in the particular context connecting people, spaces, affects. Or at least this is my explanation. Because as a critical scholar I decided to pay attention to the pamphlet as part of this context and I am enacting-writing a form of inhabited critique through this PhD thesis. And while one could object that my research has focused on business schools anyway, critical scholars ought to engage with the context of their own knowledge production regardless of their area as something that shapes their research. This then makes embodied critique both relevant and necessary.

Inevitably, some of the above also correspond to some of the suggestions in Spicer et al. (2016: 234ff), which can be combined with the concepts of embodied or inhabited critique for (rather timely) further research. The REF, the state of higher education, students' debts are all topics of "public interest". The widely shared public assumption about higher education being something that one needs to pay for, the idea of student-consumers making an investment in their employability, clearly contains "some [questionable] fairly strong shared public assumptions around an idea". In terms of engagement, I have found that it is

in general easier to care for what our respondents say if we work in in the same sector or even the same workplace but our implication in the situation researched necessarily adds a critical questioning edge. Further, alternatives representing “progressive pragmatism” are both part of the discourse, regarding the REF and TEF or forms of open-source publishing, and are visible as “present potentialities” in alternative universities, NGO clinics, or indeed radical educational practices. “Disgruntled elites” who could be engaged in this context would likely mean business and management academics at mainstream universities in the UK and abroad. Both micro-mobilizations and finding slack resources are possible through the activism that scholars engage in, and the impact agenda may perversely present an opportunity to do more of this – although with limitations on what is possible (see do Mar Pereira, 2016). Finally, any such topic, I believe, can be framed in a way that resonates with a wider audience for that particular purpose; this seems to me to be more a matter of style than content.

Performative education

Fournier and Grey mention that management education “is the most immediate arena within which CMS might hope to influence managerial practice” (2000: 23). But 16 years later, authors (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016, Perriton and Singh, 2016) still highlight a lack of engagement with critical pedagogy (something I also discussed in Chapter 7). This leads them to suggest that an investigation of the context of knowledge production together with students should be incorporated into programmes. This is definitely a good starting point but we have seen how a module aiming to do precisely that at Flatshire University often falls short of its aim of trying to do more than preaching to students and how this, from the students’ point of view, often becomes an antagonistic relationship. More generally, the “what” of critical pedagogy is adapted to management education but the “how” is largely left unquestioned, which gives me an opportunity to think through a second potential route for politics inside business schools, this time focusing on how teaching could be changed.

This route starts precisely with the recognition that our acts are performative. Engagement along the lines of “critical performativity” is laudable but as we have seen, it strangely omits concerns of education and teaching in particular, which I will turn to now. In addition to this omission and the less-than-clear connection to scholarly work in gender and science studies, Spicer et al.’s (2016) ill-spirited follow-up article is performative itself. As also pointed out by Learmonth et al. (2016), the article reinforces ideals of masculine

conduct in academia that aims to create authority by self-referencing and generating citations, and thus making a claim to being the experts on the topic of engagement, impact, and critical performativity. Such protection of one's own turf is even sensed by undergraduate management students as characteristic of a typical widespread researcher identity in UK business schools (Bell and Clarke, 2014). In this section, I will briefly reflect on what I think it means to claim that we know things and maybe know them better than others when it comes to the politics of doing teaching.

Critical performativity is built on the idea that we *know* things as researchers and academics. For instance, Spicer et al. (2016) appear to believe that they know rather clearly what is wrong with CMS. Allow me to propose here a counterargument, one built on the recognition of our not knowing where our actions eventually lead. In response to her critics, Butler clarifies in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) that gender performances are most of the time felicitous in the social context they likely occur in – people behave and dress and talk in ways that reiterate the existing societal norms. In her famous example, gender performativity is more complex than just picking another “set of clothes” from the closet. Performativity for Butler is not something that a free individual agent may choose to do, but limited performative agency is the result of the felicitous “reiteration of a set of social relations” (Butler, 2010: 152). Therefore, one cannot advocate for critical performativity as opposed to the alleged negative critique of deconstruction (Alvesson et al., 2009) because the critical promise of performativity precisely stems from its deconstructive nature. On the whole, challenges posed to hegemonic norms fail, and then hegemonic gender performances are felicitous. It is the failure of performative acts to wield their desired effects, what Butler (1990) calls “parody”, that opens up the possibility for resistance to occur.

Thinking along these lines would compel us to embrace failure both in the sense of recognizing that it is “as constitutive as success, but also that resistance is similarly ubiquitous across the diagram [of the political]” (Grossberg, 2010: 244). This would suggest not trying to change organizations by building on the knowledge of how it could be better, rather by building on the realization that the most visceral knowledge we have is that of failure to change, to know better (see Fleming and Banerjee, 2016). If performative failure works the boundaries of the hegemonic, we might try to put students into situations where performances of the hegemonic efficiency-oriented approach are likely to fail.

This approach would entail a recognition of what may be called “the performativity of performativity”. That the means-ends calculus, performativity as understood by Lyotard (1986), is sustained as constitutive of organizational existence by its continuous reiteration –

its performativity, in the sense argued by Butler (1990). Rearticulations between individuals, discourses of efficiency, organizational subjectivities – and education in the business school – can happen when these performances of performativity fail to produce their desired effects. This, to repeat a point made above, is usually not the case. Initiatives to change organizations (to the better) mostly fail as agency plays out constrained by particular organizational and societal discourses and materialities (Bergström and Knights, 2006). Rarely do we encounter conditions of possibility for such discursive positions to emerge in response to which subjects feel being othered from the organizational prevalence of the means-ends calculus, which can potentially result in their disidentification with the organization and the idea of efficiency itself (see Costas and Fleming, 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Thomas and Davies, 2005). But sometimes we do: whistleblowing, concerns over privacy, major environmental scandals, for instance, are all events that signal the performative failure of means-ends performativity in very material ways.

Business and management education is performative itself. Mostly, we reiterate by building on common textbook management theories that the means-ends calculus is important, even if this happens implicitly by treating “critical” management studies as an other that is often explained once the “mainstream” theory is already known by students (see Harney and Dunne, 2013). If tutors *tell* students that means-ends is not the only possible organizational logic for society, as I argued in Chapter 7, it mostly happens at the schools I visited, they perform in a way that does not conform to the hegemonic position – but they do so for an audience that invariably renders this performance infelicitous. Students often do not want to listen, will not play along.⁴⁴ As a result, we are not imbued with the authority to make a performative statement, often from the outset, which makes transforming our own work contexts imperative as I have already outlined. But while this struggle is happening, we might want to find other contexts in which students may actually become a receptive audience to performative failures of the means-ends calculus.

I imagine contexts in which students’ performance of accepted professional identities, bound up with requirements towards efficiency, may be questioned and challenged. This may not be achieved by CME focused either on content or process but more likely within already existing alternative organizations (Fournier, 2006; Reedy and Learmonth, 2009). If students’ performance fails, this may constitute a (critical) slippage giving way to a moment of reflection and learning. As the chance of being (partially)

⁴⁴It would require further research to ascertain how this happens precisely because of their tutors, their particular modules, their preconceptions, etc. I do not think a universal set of causes could be established as I assume reasons vary across locations, cultures, organizations, historical periods, etc.

disqualified as a professional subject increases because of acting in an unintelligible way, students would hopefully reflect on this situation and feel compelled to change their thinking and practices. For instance, signing up for graduate projects in socially responsible companies, doing a placement with an environmental protection NGO, or making some of these mandatory on our courses, could be such unexpected contexts where performativity breaks down. Such contexts are likely felicitous for performances of non-conformity while being largely infelicitous for the performance of means-ends performativity. Importantly, when students eventually get a job somewhere else, we might hope that this education was lasting, and instead of reverting to an efficiency-oriented performance, they would instead be emotionally invested to change what counts as intelligible as professional identity. While this can be a slow process paved with failure and with a necessary ethical imperative to think about its implications in a wider social context (cf. Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011), with more students getting such an education, it should nevertheless be possible since “[a]ny specific demarcation of the intelligible from the unintelligible is contingent because it cannot but rely on conventions that are contingent and arbitrary themselves” (Vasterling, 1999: 31).

Basing education not on knowing what to do and on providing a context that makes use of the radical potential of performative failure could provide a way beyond the currently heavily debated question of non-performativity. My argument in this Conclusion has been that what appears as a contradiction between “not selling out” and “doing something” is a performative articulation itself. Our actions as academics result in the idea of a contradiction, and reminding ourselves of the performativity of these actions can help to rearticulate the problematic. If we remind ourselves that critique is an embodied performative effect here and now, instead of projecting the need for it onto other organizations, and offer the chance for our students to embody critique in a similar way, we might have just made a step towards both changing the world and doing so in a critical way.

8.3. History re-iterated?

A performative effect of my research might be the creation of a sense of urgency about how criticality is practiced in management education. If so, I may have been doing it all wrong. It may be time to slow down (see Stengers, 2011), to be critical in our performance of criticality. We should spend less time on adaptation to the newly developed requirements by hacking our lives to make our use of time more efficient; to the contrary, wastefulness and “the right to stop” could be academics’ next political goals (do Mar Pereira, 2016: 107). Slowing down,

though, may not be an option at the present. While a universal idea of scholarship is definitely one I sympathize with, it is not without its own dangers. Without comparing the academic legacy of FUSO to that of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham (see Sefton-Green, 2011), its fate may be similar. Gray (2003) describes how the encroachment of audit culture eventually led to the closure of CCCS in 2002 connecting this to the impossibility of doing critical pedagogy in today's business-like academic environment.

Recent changes at FUSO since the end of my research show signs of balance sheet considerations trumping academic interests but not without a glimmer of hope. Flatshire University appointed a new Vice-Chancellor in 2015. This immediately meant that his predecessor, who oversaw and approved the transformation of FUSO into an openly critical school, was now gone, and the (strategic) case had to be made again for this particular profile amidst changed power relations at the highest level. Combined with the outcome of REF2014, this change eventually meant that the School lost some of its bargaining power. A few months later a new Head of School was to be appointed too, but no adequate candidate was found. Internal candidates were either not unanimously supported by staff members or deemed unacceptable by the selection committee. Why no one applied for the position, internal or external, who would have had both the credentials and the support to maintain the critical ethos, is a question that puzzled many staff members I talked to at the time. Being Head of School is certainly a stressful position but it also seems to be one where CMS might be put in practice – where else?

Following several months of an acting Head, finally FUSO was appointed a new Head of School in May 2016. Certainly not enough time has passed since then to make any conclusive judgement about where the FUSO is headed now, which at the same time generates considerable anxiety amongst staff members. One immediate change was the awkward announcement of becoming a proper “business school” at least in name. Beyond the symbolic nature of this change lies a financial motivation too. Addressing, or better *performing*, the dire state of expected future university finances, FUSO is being merged with the Department of Economics in what seems to be a cost-saving measure couched as logical fit. The newly formed unit is expected by FUSO members to lose its distinct critical orientation, to “dilute”, because of the widening staff base. This is certainly partly the expectation because of the antagonism between these two organizational units both in political and research orientation as well as the particular historical moment of FUSO becoming independent from Economics as discussed in Chapter 3.

However, as I also argued regarding the teaching of core modules in Chapter 7, this could precisely have been an engine behind strengthening the political organization of some staff members. Over the past few months, a relatively big group of staff members have become closely involved with trade union activities in FUSO opposing a new workload allocation model, the (possibly compulsory) video recording of lectures, redundancies, and the ongoing dispute over pay. They have successfully opposed certain changes to job arrangements and achieved that the Head of School and senior management agreed to consulting FUSO's trade union regarding any change in work organization. To put this achievement in context, it is worth mentioning that no other school or department has managed to put in place such an arrangement at the same local level. This has probably contributed to FUSO members not having tried to move on to other universities until now. It is, I believe, a case of "caffeinated" resistance that has clearly developed on the basis of previously existing, and often rather cynical, alliances. What happens over the next year at FUSO and the Schools of Massix and Woodham, and whether there is any chance of conveying the politics of education more convincingly to students, remain to be seen. As indeed does the effect of what I have articulated in this thesis.

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