'And if I don't want to work like an artist…?' How the study of artistic resistance enriches organizational studies[*]

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abstract

An increasing number of artists, from theatre makers to painters, critique recent aesthetic developments in organizational life. One of their topics is the relation between work and freedom, as employees, like artists, are required to bring fully into work their subjectivity and emotional motivation. This paper presents several contemporary examples and a case of the theatre maker René Pollesch whose plays show the dark side of these role models, leaving the audience to draw its own, bitter conclusions. It is proposed in this paper that organizational studies should consider these forms of 'artistic resistance' more systematically. Artistic resistance goes beyond extant critical intellectual approaches to organization studies: Its presentational form provides an aesthetic experience, and conveys both embodied and tacit forms of knowing in fuller, richer and stimulating ways. The paper discusses implications for organizational theory building (for example with regard to work models and the use of arts for organizational development), and research methods (scholarly applications of arts-based methods for the generation and presentation of research findings).

Introduction

> And if I don't try to live like an artist, if I don't want to work in such a way, being a PREY, AND IN SELF-EXPLOITATION! And if I don't even think of self-actualizing myself constantly WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN?! (theatre play by René Pollesch)

Organizational life and the economic world are increasingly imbued with aesthetic and artistic elements (Böhme, 2003), and concepts of work have changed correspondingly. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005) explore how concepts from the world of the arts were integrated and instrumentalised in line with the 'new spirit of capitalism'. Contemporary work models which include promises of freedom through work are often related to the world of arts and artistic concepts. Leadership may be considered 'as an art' (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010) and many employees too, particularly in the services industry, are required to behave like artists. Yet it is a counter-movement from the world of arts that is the focus of this paper. Art is a mirror of both society and the business world, and, for example in theatre, reflects a current trend of 'dedicated intervention' (Höbel, 2009) and organizational criticism. This paper deals with the critical reaction of artists, the 'artistic resistance' to economic developments, including notions of 'free work'.

It is argued here that artistic resistance provides something that goes beyond extant critical intellectual approaches to organization studies: Its presentational form provides an aesthetic experience that is able to convey embodied and tacit forms of knowing in fuller, richer and potentially stimulating ways which have implications for organizational theory building. In this vein, the modus operandi of artistic resistance can furthermore inspire scholarly applications of arts-based research methods that are increasingly advocated to get hold of and express this aesthetic experience (Knowles and Cole, 2008; Strati, 2009).

Work, freedom and people's existence in organizations are largely determined by tacit forms of knowing (Polanyi, 1958) which roughly correspond to aesthetic knowing (Taylor and Hansen, 2005: 1213). Aesthetics is understood here as sensible knowledge and aesthetic judgement, whose forms of embodied, tacit knowing go beyond rational understanding and are essential drivers for behaviour in and the understanding of organizations (Strati, 1999). My epistemological perspective pertains to the intricate nature of the 'aesthetic experience' in organizational life and to the challenge for academic inquiry to get hold of and appropriately represent findings about these embodied and emotional elements that are different from and complementary to intellectual knowing (Strati, 2009). Thinking from this epistemology, the inclusion of artistic resistance in research on organizations is about getting hold of a powerful form of critique that uses aesthetic and presentational forms to negotiate organizational critique.

Although the world of arts is a genuine habitat of aesthetics, the art world's responses to organizations have not yet been systematically included in organizational aesthetics research as 'artistic resistance'. The next section of the

paper will review research on organizations and art (organizational aesthetics) to illustrate how the consideration of 'artistic resistance' provides an area of fruitful inquiry. This is followed by section in which I attempt a definition of 'artistic resistance', by including examples from different art forms.

This is followed by a case study from the world of theatre. I chose theatre art, because theatre is the metaphor *par excellence* for human life and for organizations as well (Mangham and Overington, 1987; Nissley et al., 2004), sharing its ephemeral nature (to which is journal is also devoted) and a presentational form. René Pollesch's plays provide a dark impression of work, that generate desperation and hopelessness – forms of aesthetic, embodied and tacit knowing brought to life by the artistic form. In this section of the paper I will also provide a personal account of my engagement with this form of theatre to support the theoretical issues raised. Finally, I will discuss implications for organizational research.

Organizational aesthetics as a gate to artistic resistance

Work, freedom and our existence in organizations are often linked to artistic concepts, and I use these to show that the inclusion of artistic resistance can be fruitful for several areas of organizational inquiry. Researchers concerned with the 'art of organizations' have chosen different structures to map the field of 'organizational aesthetics'. Several seminal works, discussed briefly below, provide the basis for my proposal that artistic resistance is a fruitful field of inquiry, not least for enabling the development of existing theoretical approaches. The consideration of artistic resistance also offers new insights into still under-researched areas that already have been highlighted by the aesthetic approach. These questions revolve around aesthetic and artistic inquiry into organizational life and the use of representational forms to provide a richer understanding of organizational life.

In the first seminal work on aesthetics and organization, Strati (1999) divides the field into areas which include organizational imagery, physical space of the organization, physical artefacts, and more conceptual segments with metaphorical approaches (manager as an artist) and lessons from the arts for management. In *The aesthetics of organization,* Linstead and Höpfl (2000) emphasize critical aspects and develop aesthetic theory by drawing on interdisciplinary and philosophical perspectives to address issues of control, ethics, and identity. In *Art and aesthetics at work*, Carr and Hancock (2003) develop these approaches and distinguish between the theory and practice of aesthetics both in organizations and in ways of critique.

None of the approaches explicitly suggested that artistic resistance be included as a field of inquiry. More recently, a couple of studies emerged that are concerned with the analysis of phenomena related to it (e.g. Barry and Meisiek, 2010b; Beyes, 2006; Biehl-Missal, 2010, 2012b, 2013; Murtola, 2012). The consideration of artistic resistance can be viewed as a development of the field in general. I argue that this area also provides inspiration for researchers who already are expanding traditional intellectual forms of inquiry by developing artistic and aesthetic approaches. To clarify this line of thought, I will draw on Taylor and Hansen's (2005) review article of the organizational aesthetics field. The authors differentiate between theoretical (intellectual) approaches, developed substantially over the years, and aesthetic/artistic approaches, which remain under-researched despite having a strong potential for organizational inquiry. The latter topic can serve as a bridge to artistic resistance.

Artistic forms of aesthetic organizational inquiry

Artistic forms of aesthetic organizational inquiry (Taylor and Hansen, 2005: 1223) transform research findings into a variety of art forms such as theatre plays (Taylor, 2003b; Taylor, 2003a), quilts (Rippin, 2006) or poems, songs, and multi-media tracks (Brearley, 2002). These presentational forms, due to their multi-layered aesthetic nature, are able to convey a more holistic understanding of and feeling for organizational life. Strati (2009: 236) calls this process the 'artistic' approach, one which 'envisages the hybridization of artistic creative energy and rationcinative capacity in the performative conduct of both research and organization.' The 'artistic' approach is considered to be an innovative method rooted in the arts, and an addition to 'intellectual' approaches that are more common in the social sciences (Strati, 2009: 243). The latter include the so-called 'archeological', 'empathic-logical' and 'aesthetic' approaches which make sense of the symbolic qualities of organizational phenomena by either adopting the stance of an historian of art using qualitative methods, or by anthropological immersion followed by empathic and logical interpretation using methods such as empathic understanding, imaginary participant observation and aesthetic judgement. These methods have in common that researchers activate their perceptive-sensory faculties, also the very things they would need to analyze forms of artistic resistance that are the focus of this paper.

Artistic forms of academic inquiry are strongly related to artistic forms of resistance, and they give us something that is missing from other intellectual and critical approaches. Whilst explicit knowledge can be represented through discursive forms in journal articles and books, aesthetic knowing requires a more intricate, emotional and multi-layered form (Taylor and Hansen, 2005: 1214).

Consequently, the typical methods used in academic works which analyze for example the 'dark side' of organizations (Warren and Rehn, 2006) can and should be complemented by forms of artistic resistance that have distinctive ways to reveal the these issues. The strength of art forms is that they provide an intricate aesthetic experience and a richer, fuller, more embodied understanding. There is a gap between traditional academic forms of research and the aesthetic condition of organizational life, and it is this that poses a direct challenge to organizational aesthetics research, namely: find innovative ways of representing and understanding the aesthetic dimensions of organizations.

The consideration of artistic forms of resistance is one way of identifying such innovations. Artistic resistance and academic forms of aesthetic/artistic organizational inquiry are not so different after all. The latter typically require an intellectual framing via articles or conference panels to go beyond 'merely' doing art about organizations. However, boundaries are increasingly blurred when it comes to the use of aesthetic and artistic artefacts in qualitative organizational research methods (Vince and Warren, 2012) and hybrid forms of art and research (Schwab, 2011). These include almost academic approaches of theatre makers who – in an act of artistic resistance – turned a corporate meeting into a theatre play (Biehl-Missal, 2012b), incorporating hour-long semi-structured participant interviews and publishing a detailed brochure and documentation on the project. This raises the question as to just how formal art about organizations needs to be understood. For example, Taylor's (2003b) plays, even when performed as staged readings in academic settings rather than as full productions, still can be seen as artistic resistance by either the author, participants or spectators. Whilst I do not attempt to deliver another contested definition of art at this point, I think most people would accept that 'doing art' does not require for its legitimacy an institutional arts setting, since many contemporary art forms operate outside such a setting. Instead, it is the artist's/ author's intention and the resulting reception that determine whether the work is 'resistant' in an artistic way or merely entertaining, discursive or educative.

The use of artistic forms in organizations (arts-based interventions)

The consideration of artistic resistance complements another extant, yet still young area of inquiry, namely: the use of artistic forms in organizations. The emergence of this area is linked to changing models of work and to ideas of 'free work' which, to create value, require corporations to target the emotional, motivational, creative and aesthetic potential of their employees. So-called 'artistic interventions' (Berthoin Antal, 2009; Berthoin Antal et al., 2011), 'arts-based interventions' (Biehl-Missal, 2011b), the 'workarts' (Barry and Meisiek, 2010a) or 'arts-in-business' methods (Schiuma, 2009) are used as tools for

workforce development and organizational change. Artistic interventions can be broadly defined as bringing people, processes or products from the world of the arts into the world of organizations for the purpose of supporting processes of employee development and organizational change (Berthoin Antal, 2009: 4). These encompass paintings, theatre, poetry, literature, music, sculpture and other performative methods. Theatre for example is used to enhance presentation and communication skills, to support team building, and sometimes may enable employees to contribute to change processes (Nissley et al., 2004). Many practitioners try to learn theoretical and leadership lessons from the arts, for example from Shakespeare's plays (Augustine and Adelman, 1999). These arts-based interventions mark a new organizational interest in the potential of the arts world that is different from, and goes beyond the long tradition of organizational sponsorship, patronage and cultural citizenship.

 'Artistic resistance' is an opposite and complementary development to these instrumental 'arts-based' interventions. Among the world of artists we find not only those who are co-operating with organizations but increasingly others who are putting business issues, including the aesthetic developments (such as theatrical environments, emotional labour, storytelling, etc.), at the centre of their work without being asked by companies to do so. The intermingling of the arts and organizations involves reciprocity: the arts may be used to serve the interests of organisations; but so might organisations be used for artistic purposes (including for resistance to the organisations themselves). Identification and analysis of the complexities that turn on this reciprocity provide a promising avenue for future research.

Defining artistic resistance

The term 'artistic resistance' will be used to describe artistic works (mostly by artists and potentially by others such as researchers) that respond to aesthetic and artistic developments in organizational life. Artistic resistance in the present paper can be understood as a wide continuum of critical artistic works including: presentational forms used by academics, institutional theatre makers, individual painters and others; and performance art used by social activists. When considering artistic resistance, the focus is on artists who pick up business issues without being asked to do so by the business organizations involved – in contrast to other forms of artistic involvement in organizations, e.g. design or arts-in-business. Albeit many forms of artistic resistance are analyzed in academic studies, for example in theatre studies (Perucci, 2008), there is sparse organizational literature about artistic resistance.

In organization studies, the discussion of art works or artistic performances is not too common and displays a variety of aims. The works of Shakespeare have been used as an inspiration for leadership (Augustine and Adelman, 1999). Other studies on the analogy of *Leadership as an art* (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010), have used the world of arts as a mirror to better understand contemporary developments: Barry and Meisik (2010b) discuss art about leadership, Biehl-Missal (2010) refers to theatre plays as a critical lens on leadership. Beyes (2006) and Beyes and Steyaert (2006: 102) also draw from the most recent and postdramatic forms of theatre to theorize about organizations, criticizing the 'often unproblematic way in which theatre is used in organisational analysis for instrumental purposes and metaphorical interpretation', predicting that a reflective 'meeting between theatre and organisation will be an uneasy one. It will be quite a mess.' Such an uneasy and messy, yet intellectually and aesthetically fruitful involvement will be illustrated by discussion, below, of the case study.

Another example is Costas (2009), who in her *ephemera* article, considers Lars von Trier's film *The boss of it all* as a humorous and creative response to contemporary developments which allows for a critical insight and understanding of organizational dynamics. The paper by Guillet de Monthoux (2000) deduces more theoretical principles of value creation from Marina Abramovic's theatre performances. Ian King (2007) examines two medieval paintings and the role of the straight line in perspectival art to show that, similarly to a picture corresponding to scientific practice, management studies today cannot produce a complete view of reality. The rather unusual method to regard paintings as a means of understanding organizational studies is chosen because they 'offer us a view that is somehow more vivid and penetrative', invoking our visual sense in a persuasive, yet powerful way (King, 2007: 226). Not surprisingly then, critical visual analyses have used paintings as point of reference to show persuasive strategies in contemporary advertising (Schroeder, 2008), and also considered the artistic appeal in practices of culture jamming (Harold, 2003), where consumer movements disrupt or subvert mainstream cultural institutions, including corporate advertising. In this vein, it can be suggested that other examples of contemporary artistic practice may yield manifold insights into theoretical research questions.

More and more artists react to the 'increasing economization of society and of individuals', and *Kunstforum International* (Buchhart and Nestler, 2010) has recently devoted two issues to this theme. At this point, I shall briefly present some milestones for a better understanding, without attempting a detailed history. This development goes back to artists like Otto Dix, who, after World War I, painted the dark side of the economic system and its potential threat to the

future. Andy Warhol being the artist dealing with capitalism in new ways, creating ready mades, and becoming a master of business arts and the arts business. This is related to Marcel Duchamp's earlier engagement with economic, cultural and social processes and the anti-capitalist activities of artists such as Hans Haacke, Cildo Meireles, Marcel Broodthaers and Öyvind Fahlström in the 1960s and 1970s, triggered by the Vietnam War, Watergate and the developments in 1968. With the globalized economy and the rapid development of information technologies, the spectrum of artistic activities became much broader. Artists like Oliver Ressler, Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann work on the presentation of alternatives to global capitalism, artists like Andrea Fraser, John Bock, Thomas Feuerstein, Superflex or Carey Young expanded artistic observation into political and social action. The painter Verena Landau (2010) for example illustrated her view on cold and repressive corporate events (Biehl, 2007), and contributed to the initiative *Kunst gegen Konzerne (Art against corporations)* which addresses the complexities of corporate sponsorship and the mechanisms of the arts market (Biehl-Missal, 2011b: 167-170). Collectives like etoy or UBERMORGEN.COM use virtual spaces for critical art works and political activism. Additional examples of critical artistic feedback can be found in those Hollywood films which respond to the business world, for example *Wall Street* (financial markets), *Super size me* (fast food) or *The social network* (Facebook). Examples from the theatre are Nobel Laureate Elfriede Jelinek's (2009) recent polemic about the financial crisis, and Rolf Hochhuth's play *McKinsey kommt (There comes McKinsey)* which presents the world of business consultants as an unworthy, almost morally criminal task.

Sometimes artistic resistance can take the form of concrete interventions. There is a trend for theatre directors, writers, and painters in contemporary projects to intervene and even invade organizations. One example is Rimini Protokoll, a group of theatre directors, who used Daimler's 2009 Annual General Meeting as a ready-made event and constructed it as a theatre play entitled *Hauptversammlung* (Biehl-Missal, 2012b). Two hundred theatre spectators were imbedded, against the will of the company, into the carefully-staged event. The event received high public awareness via features in the media. The intention was to provide an opportunity for everyday people to 'experience' these massive shareholder meetings, and thereby make people attentive to the theatrical nature of organizational events and to the intricate aesthetic means which corporations use to influence participants, re-negotiate meaning, and prevent or dispel resistance in organizational settings (Biehl-Missal, 2011a).

Another example is Reverend Billy and the Church of Earthalujah (formerly: Church of Life after Shopping Gospel Choir) who, with semi-ironic preacher performances, invade retail spaces and banks. The performance activist Bill

Talen has been sentenced to jail for initiating theatrical preacher performances in his role of 'Reverend Billy' in Starbucks stores (Perucci, 2008), criticizing these aesthetized places as 'theatrical environments' which make one forget about the exploitation of workers including coffee farmers and baristas. Only recently, from an organization studies perspective, Anna-Maria Murtola (2012) argued that Reverend Billy uses strategies of parody and overidentification to interrupt the dominant capitalist ideology. The pivotal element of this artistic form of critique can be found not only in the intellectual critique, but in the aesthetic experience provided by the singing and shouting which differs from the inoffensive and persuasive atmospheres in typical consumption environments (Biehl-Missal and Saren, 2012).

Figure 1: Reverend Billy / What Would Jesus buy; Canary Mason, Mason Wendell.

Case study: the theatre of René Pollesch

This case study is from the world of theatre and further illustrates how artistic resistance may deal with organizational issues such as 'free work'. I have chosen the work of theatre director René Pollesch for a number of reasons. First, it has wide public awareness and acclaim, with Pollesch winning the most prestigious prize for new writing in the German theatre, the Mühlheimer Dramatikerpreis in 2001 and 2005. His recent play *Kill your Darlings! Streets of Berladelphia* is regarded as one of the most innovative German plays of 2012, and it deals with the lack of gemeinschaft in capitalist societies that merely consist of an 'addition of individuals' without emotional ties, in Pollesch's view (Kirsch, 2012). The recurring motif in his work is the emergence of success-oriented networks in capitalism which replace friendships and emotional bonds. The issue of emotional emptiness is representative of almost any existence in organizational environments, according to Pollesch.

For this article, fragments from earlier Pollesch plays are analysed. The works chosen have a particular aesthetic form that is of interest to organizational researchers, and also have an interesting intellectual base. Pollesch is an author-director (like a singer-songwriter) and writes his own text so as to include a contemporary critique. With a strong theoretical background and a degree in applied theatre studies, the director draws on avant-garde publications, poststructuralist theory, Marxist writings and critical theory, starting from Agamben, Baudrillard, Brecht, through Derrida, to Žižek. In this paper I am not

attempting a textual analysis, but when confronted with Pollesch's theoretical mix other academics may feel inspired to delve into specific ideas and writings that could be used for further organizational studies. I was thinking of the rise of poststructuralist writings more than a decade ago, and newer attempts to use Bertolt Brecht or Heiner Müller to theorize, for example, leadership as an art (Biehl-Missal, 2010). In such ways does artistic resistance open new theoretical avenues for researchers. Most importantly, this form of contemporary theatre particularly fits with the topic of 'free work' as the theme of the *ephemera* conference and the starting point for the theoretical considerations presented in this paper. The concept will be outlined in the following section.

Figure 2: From *Kill Your Darlings*: The actor Fabian Hinrichs stripped off his shirt and "supported", or carried away, by the athletic choir representing the capitalist network, in dollar bill clothing. © Thomas Aurin

Freedom and work in Pollesch's performances

Pollesch's theatre revolves around questions such as: 'How can I maintain my personal goal of self-actualization [and 'free work'] in the job, even if the conditions are precarious? Is that even possible?' (Rakow, 2008). These questions apply for people in many different contemporary working conditions, with limited contracts, unpaid over-time, low wages, or self-employment. Theatre plays of Pollesch that explicitly refer to these issues in the title include: *Tod eines Praktikanten (Death of the intern*, 2007); *Liebe ist kälter als das Kapital (Love is colder than capital*, 2007); *Sozialistische Schauspieler sind schwerer von der Idee eines Regisseurs zu überzeugen (Socialist actors are not so easy to convince by the director*, 2010). I have already pointed to Pollesch's idea of critical resistance to these developments, as expressed for example in an interview statement: 'Resistance in

yourself starts when you experience and understand that you are nothing but an order, i.e. controlled by the order of others' (Raddatz, 2007). It is about raising people's awareness of being not self-actualizing but alienated and exploited. Pollesch employs specific aesthetic means to reach this goal, as explained in the following paragraphs. As argued earlier, it is the aesthetic dimension that makes artistic resistance of special interest to organization studies.

The notion of 'free work' that is pursued in this article is based on Pollesch's understanding of the topic of contemporary labour. Pollesch's perspective is critical of capitalist conditions and, when outlining dilemmas surrounding work, he uses Marxist and critical theory that present the spheres of freedom and labour as incompatible. Pollesch's theatre is even pessimistic with regard to the words of Marx (1991: 959) that true freedom, defined as 'the development of human powers as an end in itself', can 'only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis'. Pollesch's plays do not illustrate any opportunity for freedom in today's society. We find a similar idea expressed much earlier in Horkheimer and Adorno's ([1947]1973: 137) dictum that there is not space for freedom in capitalism with consumption pervading the entire system. In a continuation of critical theory, Gernot Böhme (2003) states that with the aestheticization of the economy, people are seduced to focus on the intensification and heightening of life via consumption. This involves forms of alienated consumption and alienated labour (Biehl-Missal and Saren, 2012), motifs that are central to a number of Pollesch's (2002, 2012) plays on the increasing replacement of authentic feelings by empty masks in working situations, and in private situations as well. Pollesch's theatre explores the effects of global and aesthetic economies on subjectivity and personality. It commonly is suggested that theatre is a mirror of society, and characters presented by Pollesch are dark shadows of bright idealistic concepts in the business world. Pollesch's plays can be read as a negative dialectics in that they are 'dark', not 'grey' and ambivalent towards the topic. There is glimpse of freedom gained through work as expressed by Weber (2002) and later theories of self-actualization in work, rather in the performances of Pollesch the situation is clearly desperate and hopeless because capitalist power is everywhere around people and even tackles people's inner subjectivity. René Pollesch would even say that there is no scope for real creativity and therefore no point in working when someone has to do what is asked for, for example when a theatre maker has to deliver a 'mere service' on a subject chosen by others (Raddatz, 2007).

When referring to desperation and hopelessness, I am referring to forms of embodied, tacit knowing in people. I argue in this paper, that it is precisely the aesthetics of the artistic form that can 'bring to life' these understandings of work for spectators and organizational researchers.

The Aesthetics of artistic resistance

Artistic forms of resistance can provide an aesthetic experience that extends beyond forms of intellectual critique. This is particularly true of theatre performances which are always more than a dramatic text, being the mise en scène, the staging of a text that speaks to all senses. The aesthetic experience gains even more emphasis in cases of theatre where there is no dramatic text and no presentation of a holistic story line. Pollesch's theatre is a form of so-called postdramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006), that differs from the earlier forms of classical dramatic theatre (e.g. Aristotle) and epic theatre (e.g. Brecht). In postdramatic performance, common strategies include a preference for collage and montage rather than linear plots, and a redefinition of the performer's function in terms of being and materiality rather than appearance and mimetic imitation. Consequently, the aesthetic experience and overall atmosphere becomes more relevant than intellectual arguments presented in a coherent text.

In Pollesch's performances, the text is still relevant. Pollesch's theatre often is referred to as discourse theatre because performers mostly speak rather than move. In regard to linguistic content, Beyes (2006: 252) calls it the theatre of entrepreneurship: 'Regardless of the topic [Pollesch's] actors grapple with, they cannot avoid falling into managerial and entrepreneurial semantics, throwing fragments of 'business speak' at each other, … questioning their life through excerpts from recent social theory, but in the end unable to escape the seemingly all-encompassing enterprise discourse.' Whilst Beyes (2006) puts his focus on the apocalyptic and exemplary tales in this play, the present paper will focus on the aesthetic experience that is central to my argument. From the perspective adopted here, it can be emphasized that this all-encompassing enterprise discourse is turned into an emotionally-moving aesthetic experience via different theatrical techniques in the performance.

In Pollesch's earlier plays, performers often speak very quickly, sometimes almost hysterically shouting their lines, making the audience feel their desperation towards the contemporary demand for authentic feelings and emotional commitment to work. In Pollesch's *Heidi Hoh* play, actresses speak about their 'irregular lives' in deregulated markets. They echo the romantic notion of art and life falling into one as they are required to bring fully into work their subjectivity and feelings, to self-actualize in the job, exploiting the most private spaces as economic resources.

> *Insourcing des Zuhause. Menschen in Scheiß-Hotels* (René Pollesch, 2002)
> TINE: In dieser Fabrik, die Zuhause produziert, müssen bezahlte Tätigkeiten wie eine persönliche Anteilnahme wirken.
> CLAUDIA: Und wer will das kontrollieren?

TINE: Der Bladerunner.
NINA: Irgendein Androidenjäger kontrolliert, ob deine persönliche Anteilnahme hier in diesem Hotel und an deinen Gästen ECHT IST!
CLAUDIA: Ja, gut, dann lass jetzt eben den Bladerunner oder Personalchef kommen, und dann werden wir ja sehen, ob die Emotionalität, die ich hier performe, echt ist oder nicht.
NINA: Performe Emotionalität, die echt ist.
TINE: Formen von Arbeit, die Fähigkeiten einsetzen, die der Persönlichkeit und Subjektivität zugeordnet werden.
NINA: Und das ist doppelt produktiv: Zum einen erwirtschaften sie Profit, zum andern zementieren sie gesellschaftliche Normen über Sexualität und Geschlecht.
TINE: Performe Zement!
NINA: Du performst hier Emotionalität und die zementiert gesellschaftliche Geschlechterdifferenzen.
TINE: Performe Emotionalität!

Insourcing of home. People in shitty hotels (Pollesch, 2002, translation by the author)
TINE: In this factory, that is producing a home, paid services must look like personal involvement.
CLAUDIA: And who is there to control this?
TINE: The Bladerunner.
NINA: Some android-hunter controls whether your personal involvement here in this hotel and towards these guests IS REAL!
CLAUDIA: Well then, let him in, the Bladerunner, or head of HR! Then we will see whether the emotionality that I am performing here is real or not.
NINA: Perform some emotionality, perform some emotionality that is real.
TINE: Forms of work that use skills related to personality and subjectivity.
NINA: And there is a double effect: firstly they generate economic profit, secondly they reinforce and set in cement social norms of sexuality and gender.
TINE: Perform cement!
NINA: You are performing emotionality and you are setting in cement gender differences in our society.
TINE: Perform some emotionality.

In this scene, characters illustrate how they are required to perform emotions on the job – emotions that have nothing to do with their inner feelings. The reality of their work lives is somewhat unreal. Characters that are presented onstage became what they themselves call 'globalized subjects'. They are not role models for successful self-actualization.

This scene deals with issues of self-exploitation which do not automatically lead to success, rather to failure. Addressed is the connection between emotional work and widespread female discrimination, since in service and care professions women typically are expected to produce personal feelings.

Not only is the content of importance for the artistic presentation, the aesthetic form is of particular relevance. Performers with their loud, hectic demeanour generate an insecure and irritating atmosphere for all people in the audience. The atmosphere makes them experience doubts and resentment not only on a

rational level, but also via the corporeal, bodily experience. Theatre in this sense also helps to understand what Beyes and Steyaert (2006) pointed to when they argued that such forms point to the carnivalesque in organisational analysis and support the focus on the messy and the ephemeral of organisational life. Pollesch employs compelling aesthetic methods that give the audience a particular 'feeling' for contemporary concepts of work. The aesthetic experience enables a more embodied form of understanding of the tacit and aesthetic emotional dimensions related to work in today's organizations.

With their increasing desperation and rising resentment, being fed up these characters express their resistance: 'Und wenn ich versuche nicht wie ein Künstler zu leben, wenn ich so nicht arbeiten will als BEUTE UND SELBSTAUSBEUTERISCH! Und nicht daran denke mich selbständig zu verwirklichen WAS DANN?!' ('And if I don't try to live like an artist, if I don't want to work in such a way, being a PREY, AND IN SELF-EXPLOITATION! And if I don't even think of self-actualizing myself constantly WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN?!') (Pollesch et al., 2001, translated by the author) (Biehl-Missal, 2010). Audiences experience a negative presentation of the cliché of the 'manager as an artist' or the 'individual employee as an artist'. Addressed are issues of self-exploitation, expressed are hysteric frustration and anger.

Performers onstage express their doubt, screaming sentences such as: 'Dieses organische Kapital HIER IST BEUTE! ... Das hier ist Müll! Die SCHEISSE!' – 'This organic capital here IS PREY! ... This here is waste! This SHIT! [Performer pointing towards herself]. What is presented to the audience is a bitterly ironic distortion of contemporary management concepts which include notions of 'human capital' – being transformed into 'organic' 'shit' onstage.

Pollesch's fast, staccato voices display the artificiality of emotions and personalities. Theatre here becomes a political space where common experiences are articulated in uncommon ways, in order to be reflected upon and discussed by the audience. Performers actually express what these concepts mean to themselves, are hence not only professionally but personally involved in their performance. This issue will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

When artistic form is used for aesthetic inquiry there is typically a personal involvement because of aesthetic and tacit forms of embodied knowing. That applies for researchers into the aesthetics of organizations as well (Taylor, 2004; Rippin, 2006; Strati, 2009: 240). Consequently, at this point, I explain where I myself am positioned in this study, to outline some principles of personal aesthetic knowing and its artistic expression via 'artistic resistance'.

My interdisciplinary research in organization studies often uses the lens of aesthetics and theatre studies – a discipline from which I graduated at Frankfurt University, Germany, where I also studied at the Institute of Social Research that is the home of Frankfurt School's critical theory. For the last decade or so, I was involved in a couple of socio-political performances. Simultaneously, I was 'at home' in another world, the world of business and finance because I worked in student part-time jobs with the corporate communications departments of the stock exchange and other financial institutes. I felt 'mesmerized' – obviously by ways of tacit, aesthetic knowing – by the world of finance that presented itself via impressive scenery and architecture (Biehl-Missal, 2012a). At the same time I experienced competitive organizational cultures where people voluntarily and involuntarily worked overtime and pressurized each other. These motifs were the topic of a performance project with the director René Pollesch in co-operation with Frankfurt university's institute of theatre studies. Pollesch at the time and attempted a second edition of his successful play *Stadt als Beute (City as spoil/ City as prey)*, which is about the privatization of a city's public space by corporations as well as the coincident take-over of individuals' inner subjectivity by the demand for emotional forms of work. We performed the play after several months of text creation and rehearsals.

My personal experiences with this form of creative work were that the director did not approve of distanced fictional accounts, but encouraged the expression of personal experiences with 'free work'. One day, I wrote him an email with a draft for a text fragment attached, just to figure out in our next meeting that the fragment was rejected and replaced by the my entire personal account (!) in the email. Initially, I felt irritated because personal borders were crossed by publishing these lines without consent, on the other hand I found it ironic that my own subjectivity was appropriated by this form of artistic work, so I felt it was somehow fitting. More generally, I was satisfied that my lines were taken for the play. (Sadly, this should be familiar to most of today's academics in the journal treadmill.) Personal access became also relevant in terms of performing. I remember Pollesch repeatedly telling the performers: 'Do not just *cite* the text. Make me *experience* that the text *means* something for you!' This indicates that it is not just about a distanced re-presentation of contemporary social developments, but the creation of a shared experience of these issues.   So, one of my personal paragraphs which entered the play *Stadt als Beute 2* (*City as spoil 2)* (Pollesch et al., 2001) involved some of my aesthetic knowing of fear towards the system that hooked on some observations of self-abusive behaviour (line 1-5), being extended by another two lines with the motif of shopping:

T: Ich habe ein Jahr in einer Presseabteilung von einem größeren Konzern gearbeitet, und die haben da teilweise rumgelogen und alles schön gehätschelt ohne Ende.
E: Die waren total im Stress und nach einer anstrengenden Woche ist ein Pressesprecher immer groß Einkaufen gegangen und hat sich mit Krawatten oder ähnlichem belohnt. Und das beschäftigt mich auch heute noch. Hoffentlich trifft mich dieses Schicksal nicht selber mal.
J: AHHHH!
C: Ja, das wär irgendwie dumm, die Scheisse.
S: Nachdem alle andern in deiner Selbstverwirklichung herumgeshoppt haben, kaufst du jetzt durchgeknallt ein in durchgeknallten Unternehmen.
E: Kauf in dir Krawatten ein!
T: Hoffentlich trifft mich dieses Schicksal, irgendwo Krawatten einzukaufen nicht selber einmal.
S: Ja, das wär dumm.

T: I worked for a year in the press department of an international company, and they were lying about and verbally beautifying everything without end.
E: They were totally stressed and at the end of the week, one of the spokesmen used to go shopping and recompensated himself with ties and other fashion treats. And still today I am wondering and pondering about this. Hopefully, this destiny will not be mine one day.
J: AHHHHH!
C: That would be fuckin' uncool, wouldn't it
S: After all the other people shopped around in your self-actualization, you are freaking out and shopping around in freaked out companies
E: Buy yourself ties!
T: Hopefully, this destiny will not be mine one day.
S: That would be gross.

Lines like these are not used to develop individual characters onstage but are presented by multiple voices in an acoustic assemblage, filling the space atmospherically. The content should be easy to understand for spectators, also because the 'tie' is often used as a metaphor for attitudes and job contexts. For example, Taylor (2003b) in his play *Ties that bind* presents an energetic situation where academics hit each other with their ties, symbolizing the aggression in academic discussions about epistemological and methodological positions. In the example presented above, the acquisition of another highly priced tie marks the mastery of another week of strenuous work, another step on the ladder of successful work experience, and another turn in the spiral of alleged self-actualization. Shopping for (beautiful) stuff for personal compensation is a widespread consumption pattern, and this motif returns in the organizational communications department's efforts to create pleasant appearances (Line 1 and 2). Intellectual discussions about the disguises of today's economic aestheticization are made by critical theorists, for example Gernot Böhme (2003), and by research on the dark side of organizations (Warren and Rehn, 2006). Also in the theatre performance, spectators get an idea that below the surface,

things are less beautiful and rather ugly – to employ a different aesthetic category. Again, this apprehension is transmitted not only on the symbolic textual level, but via the experience of the artistic form on an aesthetic level.

In my presentation of an earlier version of this paper at the *ephemera* conference in Berlin (in the Wrangelkiez quarter that struggles with gentrification and issues of freedom and work and provided a fitting framework to the conference), I tried to give the colleagues a feeling for this issue by attempting a staged reading of some of the text fragments. I projected an English translation of the lines and asked that attention be paid to the rhythm, the sound and energy in my reading, just to provide a small glimpse of what professional performers may achieve.

Performers onstage present their weaknesses and express their inabilities to fulfil the demands of contemporary work lives. They express difficulties of embodying concepts of the emotionally committed employee. Theatre stages tauntingly, deprecatingly and hysterically echo demands like 'Performe Emotionalität!' ('Perform some emotionality!'). Pollesch's performances make aesthetically and ethically irritating statements about the downside of such suggested role models, and may encourage spectators to reflect about their own work and personality (Biehl-Missal, 2010). Spectators may question who they are, in their work lives, an 'artist of work' or rather a victim of slogans and management concepts. The audience is left to draw their own, bitter conclusions.

Conclusion and implications

'And if I don't try to live like an artist, ... And if I don't even think of self-actualizing myself constantly WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN?!' Contemporary theatre art deliberately neither answers this question, nor provides us with an emotional catharsis to carry on. The theatre play used as a case study in this paper provides spectators with an aesthetic experience that goes beyond rational and academic discourses. It provides an opportunity for spectators to delve into dark desperation and hysteric hopelessness when considering the notion of freedom and work and the combination of 'free work', emerging dazzled and potentially desperate.

Research into artistic resistance is still young, but constitutes a promising avenue for future research, given the increasing attention to aesthetic and embodied forms of knowing and behaviour in organizations, and researchers' own use of artistic forms for critical organizational inquiry. I will now sum up the possible contributions of this perspective, and address limitations of the study as well as alternative readings of the arguments I made around art and resistance.

Studies concerned with 'artistic resistance' can provide new theoretical insights for research on the aesthetics of organizations and for other areas of organizational research such as, for example, organizational behaviour more generally. Listening to critical 'feedback' from the world of arts, organizational researchers can learn a lesson. When (theatre) art is a mirror of society, its characters may also be dark shadows of the bright concepts created by the business world. This tension may be an inspiration for further critical reflection on organizational reality and metaphors of 'artistic' self-actualization. I am referring to the notion of 'reflection', because art cannot be considered to provide answers and solutions and be the saviour of people. It does not even claim to do so. There is no revolutionary impact, rather some small contributions, for example when the Church of Stop Shopping puts public pressure on organizations to change contested work practices (D. and Reverend Billy, 2011). Theatre in institutional settings in this paper was considered to be 'artistic resistance' as well, although it is not active consumer resistance, and does not even claim to engender permanent social changes, rather it may or may not provoke critical perspectives as a reaction to fugitive aesthetic experiences in individuals.

I focused on the aesthetic experience as the most relevant aspect of artistic resistance for organization studies. It was outlined that artistic resistance as presentational forms can provide something that intellectual analysis fall short of: the lived experience, a richer and fuller understanding. The case study has further illustrated how theatre performances on the dark side of 'free work' create atmospheres that differ from most presentational situations in organizational life where leaders and employees perform, or are forced to perform, self-confident personalities (Biehl-Missal, 2010). In the case of Pollesch's theatre the spectator instead might lose her or his own self-confidence, irritated questions are raised and not answered, and she or he remains in a state of excitement and even rejection. I have chosen to put an emphasis on theatre, but future research can develop these tentative beginnings and also explore many other artistic forms that take place in social life, in institutional arts contexts, and even online.

The consideration of artistic resistance also allows for a better understanding of a related topic in organizational theory: the use of artistic interventions in organizations for change and development (Schiuma, 2009). For example, a consideration of Pollesch's theatre may question the normative function of theatre in organizations when role-playing is used for the enhancement of presentation skills and for making people stick to their roles rather than, in an emancipated manner, questioning their roles and screaming out their anger. More generally, it can be suggested that artistic resistance uses different and

more challenging aesthetic means which can help to see more clearly the aesthetically-reduced nature of instrumental arts-based interventions. Theatre for example in its long tradition may be offensive, shocking and disrespectful towards spectators' feelings. Theatre in organizations on the other hand is still often controlled by managers and addresses second-order issues such as communications rather than challenging extant hierarchies (Nissley et al., 2004). These interventions employ aesthetic means in inoffensive and persuasive ways rather than challenging, provoking or irritating audiences. However, arts-based interventions cannot be fully controlled and need trust and openness and may, at their blurred boundaries between instrumentalization and opportunity, open up spaces for real participation by organizational members, and thus, for artistic resistance by employees. These unexpected aspects of arts-based interventions in organizations in particular require further research (Berthoin Antal, 2009; Biehl-Missal and Berthoin Antal, 2011). Comparing arts-based inventions with artistic resistance can help to understand better their manipulative potential and their potential both for interaction and possible change that arises from aesthetic experience and expression.

As regards the involvement with aesthetic experience, research on artistic resistance can be a training of researchers' aesthetic skills. This option is grounded in the open and challenging nature of art. The performance studies theorist Lehmann (2006: 187) is right in concluding that theatre art is an important answer to rationalization because it deals with transgression of taboos, i.e. issues that do not find space to be voiced in everyday and organizational life: 'Part of its constitution (is) to hurt feelings, to produce shock and disorientation, which point the spectators to their own presence precisely through 'amoral', 'asocial' and seemingly 'cynical' events. In doing so, it deprives us neither of the humour and shock of cognition, nor of the pain nor the fun which alone we gather in the theatre'. The Pollesch case study supports many of these arguments. It can be suggested that this form of arts is critical and political by *not* providing an answer, by rejecting the 'rules' of the social 'game' via the presentation of disrespectful, hysteric desperation. The reception of theatre art and other forms of artistic resistance in this sense can be assumed to play an important role in organizational research as well, because it may provide an additional education of aesthetic judgements by offering a space that is not controlled by rational preconsiderations but open to playing with own thoughts and dealing with emotional affects without pressure. This training of skills seems particularly useful for researchers dealing with tacit and aesthetic forms of knowing in organizations.

Resistant arts-practice can in this vein also inspire and develop researchers' use of aesthetically sensitive methods of data collection and analysis which require

new forms of understanding and the joint discussion of aesthetic artefacts, including pictures and photos (Warren, 2002; Vince and Warren, 2012). Even visual artefacts require not only semiotic, but aesthetic approaches of analysis because they are felt and experienced (Biehl-Missal, 2012a). The use of arts-based research methods does not require genuine artists, but may benefit from respective analytic trainings.

Artistic resistance can be an inspiration for academic studies in the organizational field that use artistic forms of inquiry and for the innovative presentation of research findings. There are not many studies in this area: Darmer (2006) for example uses poetry to convey research findings: the rhythm, style, tempo of his poems creates an aesthetic experience in readers and gives them an idea of the emotional dimensions of the topic. Taylor's performance of a theatre play uses aesthetic form to communicate in a 'gut-to-gut way' (2003a) which adds to the intellectual framing of research findings. The case study has illustrated how to generate aesthetic experiences for audience members that create not only an intellectual understanding. Also with regard to the hybrid tendencies of art and research where artists use structured interviews and research techniques (Biehl-Missal, 2012b), future studies could further explore the promising use of aesthetic form for intellectual inquiry and the compelling presentation of research findings, gaining concrete ideas from contemporary arts practice.

Research on artistic resistance may be insightful for artists as well. Although there is a steady increase of artistic resistance (Burchhart and Nestler, 2010), artists like Mari Brellochs and Henrik Schrat (2005: 12) for example have suggested that many artists reject business issues and may lack a well-informed understanding of ambiguous matters. This implies the limitation that not every artistic project can be taken as a serious account of organizational issues and researchers need to have enough humour to deal with provocative and biased accounts and make them useful for their research. In this vein, research on contemporary artistic resistance can may be directed to artists as well to encourage mutual learning. Artists do not have the same knowledge about economic issues as specialist business researchers but still present complementary insights.

Why not go even further. This perspective can yield new and innovative opportunities for co-operations between artists and scholars aimed to create projects which not only criticize the status quo but open up new perspectives for 'free work' or, more generally, for our existence in contemporary capitalism. With regard to the title of the paper, scholars might put it the other way and take it literally: 'And if I *want* to work like an artist, what will happen then…'.

There is increasing interest among artists – in the theatre, in the area of painting, sculpture, performance and film – in 'artistic' and aesthetic economic and organizational developments. Artistic and aesthetic means are used not only by organizations to create profit, but also by artists to deal with and to 'mirror' socio-economic developments. It is now the task of organizational researchers to respond and to creatively 'play along'.

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