

## Defacing the Corporate Body, or: Why HRM Deserves a Kick in the Teeth

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*A horror story. The face is a horror story.*

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

### INTENSITY, EVERYWHERE INTENSITY

In a late text titled 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', Gilles Deleuze performs an imaginative reading of Michel Foucault's account of disciplinary societies (Deleuze, 1992). According to Deleuze, modernity, conceived as a form of society based on disciplinary power, is currently being intensified in the direction of control, a mode of ordering central to capitalism. Control is manifest in integrated and infinite expanding circuits of flows and constitutes the development of the immanent rules of capitalism, its axiomatic.

The passage towards societies of control is a proliferation of the disciplinary biopower Foucault epitomizes as characteristic of modernity; now power is exercised directly upon the molecular materiality of being, through communications systems and surveillance technology, as well as directly on the body in the production of various, but programmed, subjectivities, sensing inclusion and exclusion on an ever deeper

and less perceptible level: retina recognition, DNA archives, and GPS monitoring.

Foucault's work on discipline, the production of docile bodies and subjugated subjects, has had a considerable impact on organization theory, not least on the varied discourses of human resource management (see especially Townley, 1994; Legge, 1995; Hjorth, 2003). The present paper, however, takes Deleuze's construction of passage towards the societies of control as its point of departure, and asks how such a premise might enrich our perception of 'the human' as a resource: how is the human integrated and deployed within labour market practices in control societies?

The paper sets out to problematize a common construction of the human that happens to be isomorphic with the way industrialism conceived of the natural resources it deployed in production: a layered sedimentation of material, with finite characteristics befitted for programmed exploitation (one of the images of the human identified by Legge, 1999). As will be argued, control societies do anything but annul the logic of industrialism: they further implement the rules of this logic, yet transgress its boundaries. Industrialism, on its side, incorporated a notion of human capital unproblematically into the motley assemblage of exploitable resources: land, capital and material. This was

accomplished, first, in terms of bodies, second, in terms of hours spent at work and, third, more recently, in terms of knowledge possessed. The society of control – which in a sense is the age of Deleuze's dark vision of a knowledge society gone awry – reconfigures this incorporation in a variety of ways, most notably via what the organization theorist Soshana Zuboff calls 'automatization' and 'informatization' (Zuboff, 1988). The automatization is well known as the takeover from the hands of the worker to the domain of the machine in a very mechanical sense. Informatization, on the other hand, has a reciprocal character, as industrial activity becomes infused with information, figures, graphs and texts, that replace the work of the hands, or more precisely, resituates it in the cognitive and communicative capabilities of the worker. The human resource now becomes available through advanced software programmes like data mining, to mention just one widespread HRM technology.

This process will here be traced to and through an advisory pamphlet intended to enlighten unemployed individuals who apply for unemployment benefits in the Danish Employment Service (DES). The DES presently uses this particular pamphlet to outline what is just as much a code of correct feeling as a code of correct conduct. It tells you how you must behave if you are to obtain unemployment benefits.

The analytical point to be maintained here is that while industrialism still seemed to make possible a critique from an outside, any critique of control societies must be immanent. If the Frankfurt School and its offspring, Critical Management Studies, could approach industrialization by way of a series of abstractions, a social critique of control must construe these abstractions as part of the social

machinery itself. Critique implies 'deterritorialization', in which the infinite movement of thought recreates the relativity of history and 'counter-actualizes' what we habitually conceive of as self, organization and life (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 88). The very notion of difference or resistance must, hereafter, be constructed in an interior that is established within the technological cosmology of the societies of control.

The paper will introduce Deleuze's notion of control societies and sketch how a critical and creative discourse on HRM becomes ever more relevant on account of this view on social organization. The text then proceeds to nothing less than a 'rhizomatic' analysis of the DES pamphlet itself, applying the two central Deleuzoguattarian concepts of 'the refrain' and 'faciality', leading, finally, to a meditation on the practical implications of Deleuzian social critique.

To conceive of the passage from disciplinary societies toward the societies of control as a clear-cut shift of existence (a reading that is almost a rule of the commentaries on Deleuze's thesis) is, as already indicated, undoubtedly off the mark. It is more a matter of an intensification and a proliferation of powerful signifiers operating through what Deleuze and Félix Guattari call 'abstract machines' (1988, p. 85ff), working at increasingly close range, these machines function to discipline not just the human body, but life itself, what the Greeks called bios, drawing on the Romantic legacy of the free individual only to supersede it, passing through and beyond the emphasis on the individual as a fundamental element, and asserting its infinite substitutability. According to Foucault, disciplinary functions – schools, barracks, factories – continuously produce the necessary 'docile bodies' of

late modernity's economic axiomatic (see Foucault, 1977a; Foucault, 1980). However, the more or less distinct organizational spaces and times of the disciplinary society have now meshed into a continuum of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'assemblages', wherein both subjectivity and production must be understood, and the truly frightening thing about the societies of control is their complete lack of an outside. The social machinery of the societies of control strongly intensifies the social coding, which was, notably, always the role of the socius: "To code desire – and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows – is the business of the socius" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 139).

In the societies of control, the identity of a self is to be abstracted from databanks, registers, tests, and focus group interviews, and are all being personalized in the dependence of passwords on memorisation. The ultimate test of 'being human' is not: are you currently in or have you been to prison, gone to school, been in the army? The ultimate test is: do you currently have a paid job and which paid jobs have you had? The decisive technologies of our age are the technologies of the labour market where a decoded flow of labour joins up with a decoded flow of capital (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 33): tell me which tests you have been advised to take, and I will tell you who you are. And every test always opens with a little teaser, a little ditty, sometimes, indeed, with a little, unpretentious pamphlet.

### THE FOLDS OF LIFE

You are now to receive this pamphlet. It belongs to the actualised world, and, as it happens, it is also a function of your memory: it is what everyone gets at some

instance in life. It is a folder you receive when you have become unemployed, and it carries the lyric title: To Be Available (Direktoratet for Arbejdsløshedsforsikring, 1999). If you think you never got this folder because you proudly claim "never to have been unemployed!", you haven't understood anything about modernity. Modernity is exactly this experience: a vague feeling of always being a little bit unemployed: sometimes as a faint, but haunting shadow behind your back, sometimes as a death sentence in front of the Employment Office. Allow yourself to stand as K. in Kafka's *The Trial*, as he is wavering in front of the gates leading into the Law: "No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate, that is, this folder, was made only for you" (slightly modified translation). So, sneak into the folder before I shall again for ever shut it.

Of course, since you are a serious academic, an able student, or, simply, a daunting reader, I cannot make you loose face in public just like that. While you gather strength to become-unemployed, I shall give the pamphlet to the newly unemployed woman Linda instead. Linda is real, for sure, empirical and made of flesh, but she is not what is at stake here. This paper is not about Linda. It is about you and me and our way out. It is, more specifically, about our possible becoming-Linda, our becoming-woman (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp. 276-277).

As we speak, then, Linda enters:

Linda had worked twenty years in a factory filleting fish when the plant was hit by 'restructuring'. She has difficulties pronouncing the word and she doesn't really know what it means, apart from the fact that it means the loss of her job. According to Linda her unemployment will be permanent: "I can't see that I am able to do anything. The

Employment Officer has to tell me what I should do...”

Because Linda became unemployed she receives the folder To Be Available, in order to prepare her for the encounter with the system of unemployment insurance. The folder is an educational technology, enlightening the unemployed person regarding her duties in the situation where she would want to receive unemployment benefits from her specific unemployment fund, her duties regarding her availability as a resource on the labour market.

This peripheral and extreme site, this folder, is exactly the place where the powers that produce subjectivity must be traced and analyzed: not as powers in their central and sovereign positions, but powers in “the multiple forms of subjugation that have a place and function within the social organism” (Foucault, 1980, pp. 92ff). It calls for the analysis of power at its extremities, not the hand of power, but its cuticles, its ragged and insignificant trivialities, a folder in its outmost folds, easily destructed, but also a thin sheet of paper easily reproduced and dispersed. It is power confronted *prima facie*, in its cosmetic details where it directly intersects with and sometimes intercepts the ontological production of life.

We habitually label this life by the very use of the expression ‘Linda has become unemployed’: this construct is, quite literally, a negative difference, pointing out what Linda is not, namely, employed. The word employed itself dates back to the fifteenth century and stems from Middle French *emploier*, from Latin *implicare*, to enfold, involve, implicate, from *in-* + *plicare*, to fold. From this follows that, at least since the fifteenth century, being ‘un-employed’ has denoted the situation of not being folded at all. Of course this is

not true. On the contrary, ‘to be’ implies a multiplicity of folds; it implies, in Deleuze’s baroque vision, nothing but folds (Deleuze, 1993). What this denotation shows, rather, is how a certain, stratified fold, *le employeur*, has become the signifier and subjectifier of capitalism, a social imaginary that “channels our desire so that desire desires its own repression” (Carter & Jackson, 2004, p. 112).

Linda finds herself in the midst of a dangerous field of forces, a battlefield. In A thousand plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of this field as the intermezzo of on the one hand the ‘plane of immanence’ and on the other hand the ‘plane of organization’ (1988, p. 265ff; for a further elaboration, see Sørensen, forthcoming). This pitches multiplicity against unity and posits “a pluralism of organization (based on enfoldedness, relational connections and becoming) against a pluralism of order (based on positions, interests and governmentality)” (Thanem & Linstead, forthcoming). The plane of immanence is drawn by a ‘war machine’, that is, by creative critique when it becomes the thought of the outside. To reach this limit, one needs to recreate the ‘body-without-organs’ of any given assemblage, which means reaching the assemblage’s full expression as desire. It is in this sense that the plane of immanence can be seen as the composition of all bodies without organs. Moreover, the body without organs “is not at all a notion or a concept, but a practice, a set of practices” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp. 149-150; see also Thanem, 2004). The body-without-organs is an inevitable exercise or a perpetual experimentation, it does not exist or it comes readymade: it is the limit of making things happen, the movement within the practice of counteractualization.

The assemblage of being (which has a multiple and coexisting assemblage of becoming) is thus situated between the organized stratifications and its specific (if only not specified) body-without-organs, letting the concept of the assemblage itself replace and reconfigure the staple sociological and philosophical concern, the relationship between the human and its world (Buchanan, 2000, p. 120). The assemblage and the territory are the two main components in the Deleuzoguattarian 'social ontology' (see DeLanda, 2002; Sørensen, 2003). The assemblage becomes territorial on account of a mixture of chaos, organization and change. However, "these are not three successive moments in an evolution. They are three aspects of a single thing, the Refrain (ritournelle)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 312).

### THE REFRAIN OF ORGANIZING

While not being a part of the waged labour force, as is Linda's current situation, the folder works by producing new folds in which Linda must reconstruct herself. As an ordering device, the folder is a refrain, and a reconstruction of the refrain of the folder might create a war machine, possibly motivating a new refrain recreating the assemblage of Linda-AND-the folder, recreating the event of Linda-AND-the folder. The three aspects of the refrain conceived as an ordering force of the socius are labelled injection, inscription and interception (see the eleventh plateau 'On the Refrain' in *A Thousand Plateaus*).

The injection is the initiation of a quasi-stable situation that connects Linda temporarily to a territory following a local tactic of survival: Linda's day-to-day combat, "my stretch of sidewalk" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 321). This is followed

by the dominant function of the refrain, dominant in the sense of a redundancy and rhythm necessary for the creation and maintenance of the assemblage altogether, namely the inscription of a geomorphic territory implying more systematic and time consuming efforts. Accordingly, by way of rules and habits, the inscription process creates a home by drawing a circle and perpetually organizing a space that operates with an inside/outside distinction, especially as member and non-member of the organization, inside or outside the waged labour force. Finally, the refrain (occasionally) intercepts and creates a way out when deterritorialized by creative forces: music, art, philosophy, or simply the outside. The refrain, however, has a tendency to segmentize and rigidify, to become a habit, morphing into what is known as 'organizational culture'.

As a preliminary injection the refrain creates a temporary shelter from the storm, the storm into which Linda's life has been thrown after twenty years with a daily rhythm on the filleting line of a fish factory. Since Linda has been expelled from the factory and reterritorialized as 'unemployed', she must herself create a liveable territory, for which enterprise she needs the resources provided by the unemployment benefit. The front page of the folder introduces this theme with a picture of an umbrella that provides shelter from what could be the rain, an umbrella under which the unemployed can seek protection.



The picture is ambiguous: if what hits the umbrella is indeed rain, it seems to be directed from a source, raining only on the person holding the umbrella. The situation converges in a tautological statement of a double bind in which the threat and the relief turns out to have the same source 'outside' the pictogram. Even if this seems to be an especially paranoid interpretation, it will not be the last production of double binds to be found in the folder; in fact, the HRM discourse as such is above all, according to Legge (1999), characterized precisely by ambiguity and double binds.

As we move into the folder, the conditions Linda has to live up to in order to receive her unemployment benefits are specified. They range from the premise that 'She must be registered at the Employment Office' to the premise that 'She must have an individual action plan'. We are moving from the injecting function of the refrain towards its inscribing function: it now inscribes onto the assemblage the codes that Linda must adhere to in order to enter into the resource distribution system itself. As such it works as a relay that organizes inclusion and exclusion. The refrain is in other words machinic, and machines are what moves through the assemblage

when it undergoes deterritorialization, and variations and mutations are drawn from it: "Machines are always singular keys that open or close an assemblage, a territory" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 334; emphasis in original). Social analysis implies the diagrammatization of the two internal limits any assemblage has, two limits to be found within any concrete, empirical practice: the system of strata and the plane of immanence. Creative as it is, the refrain may also, as indicated, stratify and rigidify and drop the assemblage into a black hole: the national anthem that makes us feel and cry, kill and die. Such a hole is the face.

### THE MACHINE OF FACIALITY

"The abstract machine crops up when you least expect it..." – right up in your face (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 168). Overstating, even shouting, the folder has equipped itself with small comics-like pictures within the text:

At first, what is decisive about the pictures is their ability to produce faces. In fact, Legge's above mentioned analysis makes her conclude that the entire HRM discourse in organization theory is a "language of representation [that] appears, Janus-like, to produce two faces: the positive and the negative" (1999, p. 255). Specifically, the pictures in the folder produce the precise emotional and facial expressions that are needed to convey the significations of the folder altogether. Deleuze and Guattari argue that

[a] language is always embedded in the faces that announce its statements and ballast them in relation to the signifiers in progress and the subjects concerned. Choices are guided by faces, elements

are organized around faces: a common grammar is never separable from a facial education. The face is a veritable megaphone (1988, p. 179).

The textual content of the folder cannot be separated from the passion and emotions produced by its visualities; it is, on the whole, “absurd to believe that language as such can convey a message” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 179), and language is, moreover, not constructed for the purpose of being understood but for the purpose of being obeyed.

One will find precisely two pictures in the folder: they create the only possible emotional expressions, and judge them according to doxa. In the first picture there are only persons indexed as women, with exposed and expressed emotions, the feminine here signifying what has and expresses emotions: the younger, unemployed woman is crying while the older Employment Supervisor is comforting her. No surprise here either: women’s bodies were, according to Linstead, “historically associated with wetness and fluidity, with flux and change, with fecundity and uncontrollable cycles of nature, with mood swings and passions” (2000, p. 31). On top of that, the Supervisor furnishes the situation with an encouraging smile; a light bend of the neck signals a will to get down to eye-level with the younger woman, in order to control the double contingency of their uncontrollable mood swings.

Eye-level is exactly what the young man in the second picture refuses to level himself down to: to be sure, he either has not been offered a seat or he has elected to stand. Not only is their relation one of no physical contact: the physical expression is that of conflict and refusal. Instead of a soft jumper, the young man is wearing what could be a leather jacket,

jeans, a leather belt, and, to complete the picture of a miscreant, something as criminal as a ponytail. Even here, emotions are strong, but they are not expressed, they seem rather to be transformed into closure and action, namely that of self-containment and mutual rejection. The Supervisor is dressed according to the graveness of the subject matter: more precisely as a judge, reigning over the resources of the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The young man is silent, quiet, and upright, a potential provocation to the Supervisor, if not to the entire unemployment insurance system. In his, as it were, ‘aberrant’ introduction to Félix Guattari, Genosko notes that capitalistic facialization works exactly through such types of binaries when it sets up and exploits the “two poles of the reassuring face and [the] face of anguish” (2002, p. 48).

This is the model of the welfare state as an inscriber of a particular refrain where direct and cognitively reasonable orders or commands are superseded by the inscription of an emotional rather than a rational code. Here it is less a matter of doing the right thing than it is a matter of subscribing to the right emotional state, letting, as it were, concepts like emotional intelligence become the abstract machine of the day (see e.g. Goleman, 1995). This jibes all too nicely with Elton Mayo’s description of the employee as “irrational, non-logical and sentimental”, and therefore in need of counselling that could address basic deviances (Townley, 1999, p. 290; see, though, O’Connor, 1999, for a more affirmative reading of Mayo).

We have, to sum up, on the one hand Linda’s desiring machines: all the connections she makes and is made up of, in mind, body and social life. On the other hand there are the machines of social production or the social machines,

namely all the connections that the system of production-consumption compels her to produce (see Holland, 1999). It is the faciality of the folder that attunes the desiring machines to the social machines. With faciality, the distinctive features of face and body are used to serve a specific mode of diagrammatization that de-territorializes whole constellations of desiring machines and connects them to production machines (Guattari, 1984, p. 162). Now, Deleuze and Guattari urge us to venture much further in order to learn, by detailed experimentation,

what a subject's desiring-machines are, how they work, with what synthesis, what bursts of energy in the machine, what constituent misfires, with what flows, what chains, and what becomings in each case (1984, p. 338).

Immanence is a matter of combining the material at hand: the body without organs is, as mentioned, not a concept, but a practice, a set of practices: a practice of connectivity and heterogeneity, a rhizomatic practice, since "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 7ff – here follows the programme of perpetual rhizome production, which I will try and adhere to in the following).

### HOW BODIES CAN FORM A RHIZOME

Think of a rhizome as a body without a face. After all, is it surprising that Foucault, who emphasized the indignity of speaking for others (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p. 209), also wrote "in order to have no face" (1972, p. 17)? The adequacy of combining the bodies that comprise reality by the addition, subtraction and

recombination of different rhizomes, stems from the fact that there not only remains, as Zizek argues, "an immaterial excess over the material reality of multiple bodies but that this excess is immanent to the level of the bodies themselves" (2003, p. 113). The mistake was to give this excess a name, a value, in short, a face. Spinoza frames this ethical dynamism of a Deleuzian social analysis in the famous sentence that points towards the political: "For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do..." (Spinoza, 1996, III P 2S). Despite our postmodern conditioning, we are not beyond our anger, our sense of injustice; we never left politics (see the central question regarding the depolitization of organization theory raised by Jones, 2003).

In the following minor machinic experiment, the bodies of the folder are recombined in order to express this virtual (but real) excess, this burst of energy in the machine. Consider the new rhizome that the pictures from the folder comprise below (no totalities here: always some couchgrass, some of a rhizome, Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 9). The face of the crying woman has been replaced with the face of the miscreant, while this new body is situated where he formerly stood:



Most strikingly, it becomes evident that the crying face betrayed the rest of the



girl's body, ascribing it only a negative sign. While the body carries a crying face, or rather, while the crying face organizes the body, it signifies what the body can do, which in the case of the crying girl is: nothing. The girl's body seems almost not able to carry the burden of the crying face. By contrast, in the above rhizome, the face of the young man calls forth a defiance if not a refractoriness: the body is bored at worst, but it is above all not decomposed, not in need of comfort. It hides its anger yet shows its strength. In the next rhizome the crying face has been placed on the man's body, maintaining his rejecting gesture:



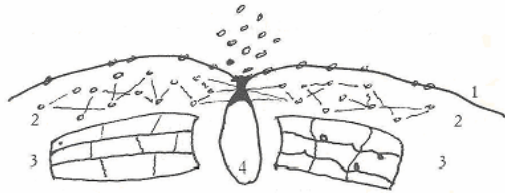
The gesture notwithstanding, the crying face completely reterritorializes the strength exposed by the body itself, so that the solitary composure of the body now expresses a reaching out for help or the like, confirming that the face is connected directly to the dominant signifier, the despot of meaning. The face universalizes the significations of power and gains immediate control over individuals, connecting them to a decoded flux of work, be it, as here, non-work or the exhausting work of being 'available' for a decoded, i.e., an arbitrary and undefined labour market. The face is a modern tattooing of the body. Immanent to this tattoo a viral becoming explodes:

man shall become the skin of the earth: "Dermic power rises: the becoming of man-as-skin" (Cache, 1995, p. 73).

To be human in this system is to have a profile on the internet or wherever. Same old story. But to think that what matters is your unique characteristics would be a blurring of the fact that your profile is relevant only insofar as it is able to unlock the code of the releasing habitus, like a key to what works under present conditions (Guattari, 1984, p. 161ff). The resources of Linda are constructed as such sedimentations, sedimentations that have been punched out of the plane of immanence, of thought and practice, that is, the plane of production, and that subsequently have been meticulously shaped so as to fit the lock. Here it is a face that will fit the lock, just as it is the case in uncountable passage points in modern society: in the passport, in internet dating bureaus, in fashion, in more and more job areas. To counteractualize the imploding refrain of the face further, to deterritorialize it, one needs to expand the zones of subjectivation, the zones of subjective experimentation. This experimentation will comprise the remainder of the analysis.

## ZONES OF SUBJECTIVATION

In the last picture the two women, with their arms and body composure, together comprise a circle operating on the plane of the folder (O), whereas, in the right picture, the young man's arm and upright spirit produces a line towards the outside (-). A subtle distinction, I admit, but for your benefit Deleuze has made a drawing that enables such a produced circle (O) and a produced line (-) to be resituated in their ontological topography as real partakers in the production of subjectivity:

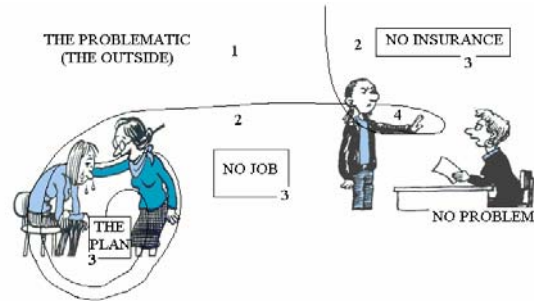


come', is to fold the outside into an inside. The strata, on the other side, are the cartographies of common sense as for instance expressed in the waged labour system. The strategic zones are creative zones of metamorphosis, wherein the war machines move: so the question is how one situates oneself between the stratum of the visible and the stratum of the expressible, still working with the line of flight towards the outside.

Below, Deleuze's drawing has been directly applied to the pictures in the folder (that's right: we are just plugging one machine into another!):

In this composition of subjectivation 1) is the line of the outside; 2) are strategic zones; 3) are the strata; and 4) is the fold, or the zone of subjectivation (Deleuze, 1988, p. 120)[1]. The circle (O) that is expressed in the folder is the fold itself (marked '4' in the picture), but as a fold it is invalidated in a certain sense, since it has been cut off from its outside. The strata have moved in on it. The line (-) in the folder is found as one of the virtual dotted lines that pass the strategic zones between the strata and the outside. It is a smooth space between the strategic lines drawn in the system of unemployment between permanent supplementary benefit (a jungle) and full employment (a civilized life).

The fold is the liminal possibility for freedom, the only one. The fold is a diagram of forces (Rose, 1996, p. 188ff), and ontologically the fold, in Deleuze's reading of Foucault, is the way by which one creates an inside by folding the outside into an inside. There is no way out other than the folding of the outside. Hence, to produce what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a new subjectivity or, perhaps more pompously, 'a people to



In this model, the self appears as a fold of the outside, and a self is always a mixture between a closed circle (O) and a line (-). Again, 1) is the line of the outside; 2) are strategic zones; 3) are the strata; and 4) is the fold, or the zone of subjectivation. One observes that the left picture expresses a reduction of the strategic zones, intersecting in THE ACTION PLAN (which you create jointly with the Employment Officer) as the defining stratum. Contrary to the striated space controlled by the labour market, the strategic zones are smooth spaces, where one moves as cleverly as possible, keeping an eye out for the details that could connect to an outside (see the fourteenth plateau '1440: The Smooth and the Striated' in Deleuze & Guattari,

1988, p. 474ff). Often, though, the strata have engulfed them. The strata themselves, NO INSURANCE – NO JOB, have closed in – both from the right and from the left – on the zone of subjectivation, thereby cutting its connection to the outside. The fold – now not a fold but a circle (O), namely the circle in the left picture – is entirely defined by the strata: resentment and defeat.

The right picture, conversely, maintains a line towards the outside, which is not yet confined. Moreover, the line of the outside sets a limit between THE PROBLEMATIC and what is considered NO PROBLEM (the solution every problem deserves according to common sense). Turning every problematic into (no) problem is the strategy of all apparatuses of capture (see the thirteenth plateau '7000 B.C.: Apparatuses of Capture' in Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 424ff). But to believe in the future one does not need a face and an interior, one needs masks and an exterior (no circles, only lines of escape). The paranoid machine – a version of which is the machine of faciality – blocks connections and ties all connections to the Father (the judging Supervisor in the right picture) and the desire for the Mother (the comforting Supervisor in the left picture). Let's bring'em together: in the rhizome below, Neurosis meets Judgement:



As could be expected: nothing happens – except, perhaps, titters from the audience? Neurosis and Judgement is Narcissus and the Mirror: there were no resources behind the comforting words, nor any authority behind the statement of the case. And even worse: if you happen to be a civil servant, you appear to have precisely these two possibilities: the comforting aunt or the judge, both tired and tiring. These abstractions hardly fit the concrete practice of being a public servant. They jibe, however, nicely with the abstractions inherent in the neoliberal ideology currently in high regards throughout the world, in which the real free and productive individual is the private entrepreneur.

Leaving, then, the plane of organization, moving towards the plane of immanence, one sees the free 'bachelor machine' (in the right picture) as it enters into composition with the sister, the maid, and the whore, maybe the vampire, always towards an outside: "in each case [the bachelor machine] augment[s] the connections of desire on the plane of immanence" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 63). The bachelor machine is characteristic of Kafka's artistic machine, serving a role as a transversal connector in the social field, establishing, as it were, a way out:



Here the two possibilities are finally brought together. It appears that when the machine of faciality is intercepted and recombined, it can break down and become viral and productive (see ten Bos & Kaulingfreks, 2002, p. 9ff). The bachelor now functions as an agent of pure production that both comforts and dignifies, indicating a region of relative calm, a protected area, yet it also aerates the situation with a draught from a radical outside, an exterior beyond measure. As it turns out, the gesture the man performs makes the girl raise her head and face the music.

### SUBJECTIVITY IN HRM

Such a reading of the folder is an explosion of a detail a good way beyond Derridean deconstruction. Deleuze and Guattari elucidate how a portrait photo – which is the coagulated expression of the machines of faciality as well as the redundant refrains – should be attacked: “The goal is to obtain a blowup of the ‘photo,’ an exaggeration of it to the point of absurdity” (1986, p. 10). By way of this absurdity, it has been the aim to show that within the folder itself, issued by the Labour Directorate, there is a becoming of a minor language: the picture on the right continuously deconstructs the ideology of

the picture on the left, which in itself complies with the text of the folder. This minor language rises up exactly where the refrain is deterritorialized and takes up its third function, that of interception and a line of flight, a line towards the outside. Hence, the two pictures become imperceptible and create a zone of indiscernability in which they enter into viral proliferation; there is no longer left or right, but a becoming where left and right prove to be indistinguishable and something new is produced.

This novelty has, then, a number of implications for organization theory with regards to the construction of human resources as a process and production of different intercepting refrains, rather than as fixed sediments and layers, data to be mined and numbers to be calculated in tests and assessments: in the majority of the HRM literature the concept of human resources appears as little more than a reterritorialization of the human on the code of industrial economics. The very concept of resources is essentially connected to natural resources, that is, the raw material that is excavated from the ground. These are to a greater and greater extent exploited to their global limits: natural resources are scarce; what resources are available is only what is already there, since they became sedimented in pre-historic time. This counts, *mutatis mutandis*, also for the human resource. What is at play here is, quite literally, a naturalization of a social fact that was originally itself deducted or cut off from the flow of natural fact: since natural resources amounts to what is already there and hence are scarce, this is also the case for human resources. Counteractualizing this naturalization will be to insist on the constructed nature of this social fact, since, in Holland’s formulation, “scarcity is not merely

socially managed, but is socially fabricated in order to found and secure social organization in various forms” (1999, p. 5). This conceptualization further insists on the idea that societies, no matter what their circumstances may be, have always been in a surplus of production in toto. The full body of the social is a luminous body-without-organs, overflowing with desire. The idea stems from Georges Bataille and it defers the question of scarcity and the exploitable human resource to where the schism really should be approached, namely as a political problematic. This problematic focuses on how social organization revolves around and resolves itself in the determination of distribution: the where, how, and for whom the surplus shall in fact be actualized.

Meanwhile, this naturalized conceptualization of resources finds itself imported directly and largely unaltered into the HRM discourse, with its preoccupation with the calibration of supply and demand, as well as with the optimal utilization of human resources (Werther & Davis, 1985, see e.g. p. 168ff). It is a conceptualization that is a strategic reduction of earlier uses of the word resource: it stems from Old French *resourdre*, relieve, to rise again, from *resurgere*, to lift up again, as in resurrection; as such the concept is more in line with re-creation than it is with exploitation. A resource appears as a virtual multiplicity with no determinate actualization, and it can never be fully exhausted. Rather than being a layered and measurable sediment it is an event of indefinite transmutation: it is an act and a direction, an event and a way out. It is true, to be fair, that the discourse on HRM, as it existed on the fringes of the rather flimsy postmodernism in organization theory, would expand and come to include a whole new range of

themes like empowerment, learning, and organizational development, thus countering the individualistic, centralistic, psychologistic, psycho-biologistic, and reductionistic stance here labelled the dominant code, instrumental and normative as it is (Steyaert & Janssens, 1999, p. 186). This was a much needed attempt to deterritorialize the field, multiplying its approaches and diversifying its practices, since, certainly: “To be relevant ... HRM must provide people with a framework for understanding power” (Townley, 1994, p. 1).

Yet it does seem that postmodernization, here in its positive sense of deconstruction, would still, paradoxically, thrive only in pretty closed circles (we got Tamara, ephemera and a Guantánamo corner of the Academy of Management out of it), and that the urge for more management – and further “liberalizations” – will drive the area towards data mining and other sophisticated surveillance technologies from the societies of control. This urge forces both managers and employees into the passive role of mere technology consumers, leaving the field condemned to perpetual management commodity fetishism, i.e. a “fetishisation of the ‘techknowledgy’ commodity” as succinctly put by Böhm (2002, p. 333; see also Böhm, 2003).

And Linda? HRM is certainly, as Legge (1995; 1999) argues, a discourse of largely academic origin. And even if Linda is real, she will never come to read Deleuze or Guattari, nor, for that matter, Sørensen. No one is qualified to speak on behalf of Linda, because her dignity depends not on her face, but on her body. That is why inventive academics must speak with each other, experiment with their own becoming-Linda, that is,

experiment with the material at hand and enter into a dangerous crisis with the virtual excess, experiment with the body without organs, where a new fragility, which is to say, a new ethics might appear. If HRM lacks such an ethics, it is because it has too long been ruled by the face. Perhaps we do not need to decapitate this king but to deface him. Let him then spit out his teeth.

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### NOTE

[1] In what can be seen as an extension of this line of thought, Richard Weiskopf invests in his 'aesthetic' analysis of the Weberian iron cage the same Deleuzian figure as an expression of organization per se, namely as a (contested) multiplicity (Weiskopf, 2002, p. 85ff).

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