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Introduction to the First Part of the Issue on Materiality & Storytelling

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This special issue of TAMARA focuses on a new emerging field of storytelling informed among others by recent theoretical instigations in science studies (Barad, 2007) that *matter matters*.

As such, the double special issue highlights in various ways on the manner by which matter comes to matter in organizational story processes. Taking storytelling and discursive practices into the material realm raises the question of the agency of matter to the extent that matter is placed as an agential-force equivalent to that of human agency. This constitutes a profound conceptual shift well worth exploring in greater depth.

Drawing on various aspects of the new material feminist turn, the turn to affect, to space and to ontology the shift is not so much a turning 'away from', as a 'turn towards' the working of a different *difference*. A difference of meaning-mattering and material-discursiveness. A difference therefore of reworking previously constituted binaries. In short - a difference, constituted by a *reorientation* (Shotter, 2011) more than any specific theorizing.

Inquiring into this reorientation, this special issue of TAMARA specifically aims at throwing light on the relationship of organizational discursive practices and material (artifactual, bodily, spatial) practices in relation to understanding and dealing with processes of organizational development, learning and change, and organizational inquiry.

Background

Recently, there has been a growing interest in resituating the duality of language and materiality and, subsequently the duality of verbal and nonverbal communication. Both dualities have been prominent in communication studies and in organization studies since the linguistic turn, where the main focus has been solely on language/verbal communication leaving matter/nonverbal communication to be an additional extra. Language has thus become hegemonic over matter perhaps with the implication that too much power has been granted to narrating agents (Barad, 2007), while sight has been lost of the agency of matter and the use of non-linguistics resources of sense-making (gesture, gaze, other kinds of body movements, communication aids, etc., exceptions are Raudaskoski, 2009).

These dualities reflect at a deeper level the Cartesian duality of mind/body. Embodiment has however been well researched and elaborated over the past decades such that it is uncontroversial now that human social interaction is embodied and involves intertwined cooperation of different modalities of equal importance (Stivers and Sidnell, 2005:1). Researchers from several allied fields have recently begun increasingly to document the precise ways in which gesture, gaze, talk and aspects of the material surround are brought together to form coherent courses of action. Within Conversation Analysis (CA) Goodwin's (2000) concept of 'contextual configuration' is but one such example of a methodology for researching embodied social interaction in a multimodal manner that includes the material structure in the surround as an important affordance for agency. Within social psychology Middleton & Brown's argument that

objects can serve as memory devices by which we may establish a particular relationship to some aspect of our past' (2005:142) is but one example of understanding how material artefacts feature in learning and remembering. Within Science and Technology Studies (STS) Sørensen (2009) is a more recent example of a scholar developing concepts of the notion of 'relational materiality' on the basis of empirical studies with specific focus on the use of various teaching artefacts in the situated practice (blackboard, pencils, bodies). Finally, Juelskjær (2009) and Strand (2012) are examples of scholars developing new research designs informed by the baradian onto-epistemology for the analysis of/and enactments of processes of becoming.

The body of research that here is in short referred to as 'multimodality & materiality' are only just beginning to enter the field of organization studies. Therefore, the possible implications of these studies for the area of organizational learning, development and change are still to be fully elaborated. Storytelling has for the past decade been well researched in regard to organizations (Boje 1991, 2001, 2008, Jørgensen, 2011). However, the combination of multimodality & materiality and organizational storytelling is now being explored in greater depth with a critical edge that elaborates the material-discursive practices of organizations (Strand, 2012, Jørgensen & Strand, 2012, 2014, Boje, 2014, Boje & Henderson, 2014, Jørgensen and Largarcha-Martinez, 2014).

Structure

This double special issue proudly presents ten such elaborations that constitute the two parts of the issue. 1st part consists of five contributions and common for these papers are that they are concerned with studies of material-discursive practices of working life and organizational becoming. 2nd part is especially focused on artifact-driven inquiries and restoring actions.

The five papers of this 1st part of the special issue on Materiality & Storytelling can of course be read in any order you may please. However I have sorted them using the following line of thought.

We set out with a small and wonderful piece *Listening to the Material Life in Discursive Practices* by Cristina Reis as an example of a scholar who starts to ask herself the question of which material life is/can be experienced through story inquiries? Especially through listening to that which is *not* being said. Listening to what is being said between the lines, so to say. Her point being that discursive practices do relate to lived experiences of a sensed reality and materiality. Although influential, these aspects are not always included for various reasons. Material life is thus understood as the lived experience of discursive practices in specific material, temporal and spatial contextual structures.

From here – through the excellent paper by Craig Rich *Object pleasures and job segregation* - we encounter the lived experiences and becomings of the material life of Barbers and Hairstylists through the significance played by the mirrors of their workplaces. The paper shows how the mirror plays an important role in sorting themselves into the two different job categories due to the complex affective relations produced by Barber's avoidance and Hairstylist's engagement with mirrors. Based on yearlong comparative ethnography Craig is asking the question: How do object relations constitute segregated job be/longings?

Having touched upon the affects of material objects, we next encounter Malou Juelskjær's stunning paper on *Changing the Organization: Architecture and stories of School life as Material-Discursive Practices of Producing "Schools for the Future"*. Juelskjær here invokes the notion of apparatuses of material storytelling to study the enactment of an event, where students, teachers and learners were engaged in building models for learning spaces to inspire architects in designing a new school building. Through this Juelskjær addresses the challenges of the intraplay of the environment of architecture and interior décor - and the learning bodies. Affective tonalities, understood as tensions and intensities that express it self relationally, are key in understanding the governing of the re/furnishing. In being concerned with the question of: How the affective is produced, made durable, transformed and governed through 'comfort-technologies' of furniture Juelskjær points out how this production of differentiated learning spaces and ideas about the learner, configure and reconfigure the organization known as 'a school'.

Technology is also the topic of the fourth paper *Embodied Being: Examining Tool Use in Digital Storytelling*. Here Stacey Irwin is taking us to digital storytelling as an embodied practice that pays respect to the ontological dimensionality of the human body and explores how this Being in the World becomes through story and technology as intertwined parts. The digital tool has a voice here as the 'technological other'. By arguing for invoking an aesthetic stance towards *techne* as a manner of constituting the embodied being in (approaching) digital storytelling, Irwin advocates an interesting and relevant point regarding the embodied being in a technologized world of becoming and the paper sheds light on the embodied being in tool use comprehended as art and craft intertwined in *techne*.

The issue of the embodied multimodal dynamics of communicative resources is taken further in Pirkko Raudaskoski's thorough and well-illustrated paper *Relaying experiences for care home design* on the situated material-semiotic practices of organizational planning and decision-making. The paper enacts an analysis of a part of a scenario of putting forward ideas and wishes about the facilities of a soon-to-be-built care home for people with brain injury. A situation, where the future occupants themselves could not be present to express any views, so their point of view was mediated by others. The paper highlights on the communicative resources through which this mediation was done and how the performance was geared to the audience present by invoking and resemiotizing various local and non-local meaningful elements (e.g. texts and photos). By taking us to the close analysis of the embodied material-semiotic practices this paper closes the 1st part of the special issue and provides a steppingstone to the 2nd part that is specifically focusing on artifact-driven inquiries and restorying actions.

Enjoy the reading

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