

Responsible Management Chapter 5

Can Management ever be responsible? Alternative organizing and the three irresponsibilities of Management

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Abstract

This chapter argues that management should be understood as a concrete set of institutionally embedded practices, rather than an abstract verb for ‘getting things done’. Management, as a discourse, a social group, and a practice cannot become responsible because it is constitutively irresponsible and actively de-responsibilises others. It is irresponsible because management is an agent of external interests and limited to the effective realisation of those interests without regard to substantive values. In practice this means externalising costs where possible. We further argue that management actively de-responsibilises employees by determining the purpose of their activities for them. This renders management inherently anti-democratic, as it removes the possibility of autonomous action that would enable effective responsibility for all. We argued that real responsibility is only possible if we abandon management to focus on organization instead. Because it is not institutionalised in the same way as management, *organization* is more open to developing democratic and collective, rather than individualised and limited, forms of shared responsibility. We outline this approach by considering workers’ cooperatives as spaces of democratic self-determination and common ownership, fostering an expansive conception of responsibility. Without such changes, we suggest, promises of a more responsible management will be mere window-dressing.

Worker Cooperatives, alternative organization, commons, management irresponsibility, externalities

Introduction

To unpack the question of whether management can be responsible, we need first to clarify what management is. Within the literature on responsible management education, the primary emphasis has been on management as a body of knowledge, or codified set of techniques, often taught through business schools, for example through the UN's Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) (Louw, 2015). When considering the actual practices of managers, the emphasis has been on attempts to professionalise management, for example through the work of the Chartered Management Institute in the UK, or Khurana's (2007) suggestion of a Hippocratic oath for new MBA graduates, functioning like the professional codes of medical doctors. Others have focussed attention on the individual, 'normal mainstream manager', as distinct from codified practices or broader social groupings (Laasch, 2018). Parker (2002) distinguished three uses of 'management': as a noun, when we refer to 'the management' as a specific social group; as a verb, when we refer to what managers do; and as a codified body of knowledge promulgated in business schools through management education. For Parker, however, and more recently Hanlon (2016), the process of managing is more than just 'getting things done'. Management is a particular way of doing organization: one that presupposes hierarchical command and control with managers in command, and employees following this direction. The function of management is conditioned by the ideas contained in the corpus of management knowledge, and by the power relations between managers and the managed. As such, the three uses of 'management' are intertwined in a concrete social history of management, so that managing, as an abstract practice, cannot be separated from its historical appearance as a discourse and a set of socially located practices. For this reason, we follow Parker in preferring the more open term organising when we turn to alternative practices of 'getting things done' in later sections. For now, however, it is worth considering the implications of management as it currently exists, and whether management, as such, can ever really be 'responsible'.

Irresponsible Management

In responsible management education, the primary emphasis has been on management as a body of knowledge, or codified set of techniques, taught in business schools. Like Corporate Social Responsibility, the promise is that management can become more responsible, delivering valuable outcomes to a wide range of stakeholders, rather than focusing exclusively on maximising shareholder value (cf Banerjee, 2007; Jones & Fleming, 2012). Such a notion has been contested from almost its inception, most famously through Milton Friedman's argument that the only responsibility of management is to maximise shareholder value or, in a charity, realise the will of the founders. As Friedman (1970: 70) states: 'in his capacity as a corporate executive, the manager is the agent of the individuals who own the corporation or establish the eleemosynary institution, and his [sic] primary responsibility is to them'. Whilst not published in an academic journal and having been subjected to almost 50 years of critique, this argument should not simply be dismissed. It is

part of a liberal conception of responsibility based on the principle of private property that, as Friedman's quote highlights, includes the corporate profit motive but can also be extended to any legitimate interests of a principal that management represent. In this, Friedman is articulating a core tenet of the managerial revolution, in which management came to the fore as a representative of property, once ownership and control were separated.

This liberal conception of property rights goes further, however, to conceptualise the political subject terms of self-ownership (Macpherson, 2011). This framing of political responsibility in terms of self-possession, generates a negative conception of autonomy as freedom from external interference, but also creates the possibility for an employment relationship in which one sells one's autonomy. As a possession, self-hood and autonomy are alienable, and therefore exchangeable in a labour market. Without this understanding, the contemporary employment relationship and the hierarchy of managerial authority would be unimaginable. Together, these two aspects create the possibility of management: a mandate that derives from the property rights of owners, which the manager represents; and the legitimisation of control over subordinates through a conception of the self as a possession whose capacities can be contracted out for a wage.

We will return to this idea of selling autonomy and contracting out responsibility in the next section but first it is worth considering some of the implications of this grounding of management on a conception private property. Very briefly we will suggest that private property creates a very limited form of responsibility, as Friedman suggested, because the contractual basis of management as an agent of owners (in the case of a capitalist enterprise), founders (in the case of a charitable foundation), or the state (in the case of the civil service), positions management as representing the strictly delimited interests of an external principal. In turn this necessitates the exclusion of other interests and leads management to externalise as far as possible any responsibilities that do not directly impact on their codified and contractual responsibility to their principal. This drive to reduce the responsibilities of management, and thereby the responsibilities of the principal they represent, externalises costs onto the environment, the future, employees, and the general intellect, even though it is management that take the decisions leading to these costs.

The most obvious example of externalising responsibility is the environment. Faced with the often spatially and temporally distant effects of pollution and carbon emissions, and with their own short-term accountability to principals, management inevitably fails to take responsibility for the full costs of its activities. This cannot be remedied by a more expansive notion of management unless such is completely divorced from its constitutive role as an agent of codified interests and private property. As long as management is acting as an agent of limited interests then it will be driven to externalise costs where possible, onto others to whom it has no institutionalised responsibilities. This is the first irresponsibility of management, to the environment and to the future generations who will inherit it.

The second irresponsibility of management derives from the liberal idea of self-possession as the core of political subjectivity. The concept of self-possession underpins the employment contract as it rests on the possibility of selling or renting a body's physical, affective, and intellectual capacities. Such is only possible if there is a splitting of the self from all which that the self can do – the capacities contracted to an employer – and a residual, legal conception of the self as contractor or owner of these capacities. Whilst, in theory, the legal self maintains autonomy over where, when and to whom they contract their capabilities, the practical direction of those capabilities is handed over to managerial representatives of the legal employer¹. In contrast, the production and reproduction of those capacities is not the responsibility of the employer but of the employee and their family carers, most often women (Dalla Costa & James, 1976; Fortunati, 1995; Fraser, 2014; Weeks, 2014). This 'frees' management from both the responsibility for, and the cost of, reproducing the capacity to labour. Even if wages fall below the level necessary for a culturally acceptable level of subsistence, a manager is not responsible for addressing this, or any of the consequences associated with it. Indeed, they would be remiss in their primary responsibilities to efficiency and cost-control if they paid more than is strictly necessary to their employees, even if this meant widespread working poverty.

Whilst starvation wages might seem Victorian, they remain the case for many on low-pay, even in the most 'advanced' economies (Bloodworth, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2001). In the UK today, in-work benefit payments function as a form of nationalised subsidy for companies paying below-subsistence wages, socialising the real costs of employment. But even for the most privileged of workers - degree educated knowledge workers - the cost of producing the intellectual abilities upon which managers depend is made the responsibility of the prospective employee who, in many countries, must pay for this privilege through student debt. Management, in short, is not responsible for the very thing that they manage: the capacity of their employees to work. The framing these capabilities as 'human capital' extends the liberal idea of self-possession to make individuals responsible for becoming employable and useful to managers (Fleming, 2017; Cremin, 2010). By making human beings responsible for their employability, management avoids paying the full-cost of their employees' working capacities: capacities without which they would have nothing to manage. Instead, responsibility is externalised onto the shoulders of employees, their families, or the State, insofar as it continues to function as a social safety-net.

The third, and final, irresponsibility that we will consider here is management's dependency on the general intellect: the combined knowledge and capacities of human-kind, a kind of collective intelligence outside the control and ownership of any individual or

¹ This alienation of the capacity to work also creates the indeterminacy of labour power that renders the employment relationship antagonistic (Braverman, 1974; Thompson, 1980). In securing the capacity of an employee to perform work, at the market value of that capacity, the manager still has to convert that capacity into productive labour whilst the employee might well have other ideas about what counts as a 'a fair days' work', or how best to expend their energies.

organization, but which remains a condition of possibility for the continued functioning of organizations. Without getting bogged down in the various conceptual debates around the idea of the general intellect,² it is easy to see that management cannot be responsible for the reproduction of all the conditions of possibility of its own existence. As in our previous example, some of the cost of their productive potential is borne by the workers themselves, when they pay for their own education. We can extend this to employees working out in the gym or shopping for the clothes necessary to perform aesthetic labour in the service sector (Pettinger, 2004). However, management needs more than employees. It also requires an extensive infrastructure that enables productive activity, for example transport, communication, and legal systems; research and development driving scientific discovery and technology innovation; or direct governmental subsidies for investment. All of these enable companies to carry out their business but the goal of management is, where possible, to minimise their responsibilities for them. This goal is apparent in the avoidance of even minimal compliance with tax liabilities by companies that are profiting from a dependence on national infrastructures of the countries in which they operate. For knowledge intensive organizations this is best highlighted by Apple. Apple have invested significant resources developing complex tax structures to avoid paying corporation tax in the USA (Dicken, 2015) and yet did not develop any of the basic technology in their best-selling product: the iPhone. As Mazzucato (2013) painstakingly demonstrates, all of the major technological developments that made the iPhone possible were paid for by public research funding, channelled by national governments. Managers and companies have benefited from this contribution to the general intellect privatising its benefits for individual profit without any responsibility for reproducing the underlying, collective knowledge that was a necessary condition of their success.

In each of these examples it would, of course, be possible to argue that management, and the companies whose interests they represent, should take more responsibility. It is our contention, however, that such responsibility is both impossible and undesirable. To consider desirability for a moment, let us consider the second irresponsibility: for social reproduction. The wholesale privatisation of social care, medicine, security and public space are now a standard trope of dystopian fiction, perhaps best captured in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy or *The Heart Goes Last*. These fantasies present a privatised management having complete control over all of its conditions of possibility, but the result is one of total social control and a complete lack of human freedom. Do we really want managerialism to control our parenting, education, health-care and to determine what counts as clean air? This would replace democracy with technocracy, and human autonomy with total managerial control.

These dystopias leave us uneasy because they generate moral dissonance by bringing conflicting logics together. The logic of care structuring a family is quite different from that governing a business corporation. Whilst managers *instrumentally* control resources

² For a discussion of this concept, and contrasting positions in the debate over it, see Pitts (2018), Hanlon (2016) and Vercellone (2007).

(including human capabilities) to pursue specific and delimited objectives, the logic of care we expect from government and families is concerned with fundamental, inalienable human rights and a respect for the whole person. This is not to say that these logics are completely clear cut. There are plenty of abusive families, and in businesses there are diverse logics that shape actions (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). The risk with extending management responsibilities into all the areas over which its decisions have effects, is that it would extend the specifically managerial logic we have been outlining, which emerged in the context of the joint-stock corporation, into areas currently governed by a different logic. Indeed, we already see this in education, where centuries-old discussions of the purpose of education have been trammelled by narrow, managerial objectives of maximising human capital and employability (Allen, 2017; Cremin, 2010).

This argument about a basic logic of management derives from the specific form of the limited liability corporation (whose responsibilities are by definition limited by incorporation) and the concrete practices and identities of management that have arisen within that context. As long as management stands as a representative of external, pre-defined interests, it will be driven to minimise its responsibilities for the wider conditions of its own existence, or to shape them in a way that serves its objectives. Complete responsibility would mean complete control and a tyrannical form of big-brother governance. This is because management itself, is profoundly anti-democratic (Hanlon, 2016). As the next section shows, this irresponsibility is not just an unfortunate side-effect of management. The simultaneous abrogation and appropriation of responsibility is key to management as a concrete social practice.

Management as De-responsibilisation

In his ‘secret history of management theory’, Hanlon (2016) takes a Marxist and Foucauldian approach to analysing management as a discourse located in a particular political and economic formation: the capitalist business organisation. The foundations of management developed in hierarchical organizations concerned with controlling employees so as to maximise the efficient achievement of externally determined goals. At its core, Hanlon argues, management theory is an elitist endeavour, driven by a fundamental mistrust of the masses and democracy, and a concerted attack upon the authority of the craft worker. In craft work, authority was grounded in technical mastery and expertise: in knowledge. This knowledge was more than intellectual capital, however. As they were regulated by the collective body of the guild, craft skills were inextricably bound up in a moral economy. A craft worker ‘after years of training was entered into a guild as a master with political rights and duties to the community’ (Hanlon, 2016: 58). Their responsibility was to reproduce a ‘way of thinking about work and life and a regime of production’ (*ibid.*). In eroding this collective but autonomous way of life, the emergence of industrialisation and management was experienced as a dislocation and an assault upon a wider moral economy and its

traditional value practices both in the workplace and the wider networks of social and cultural relationships that work was embedded in (cf. Robins & Webster, 1999).

Management is not an abstract, generic process of coordinating activities. Its concepts and practices developed through the 19th and 20th centuries within the actually existing social relations of industrial capitalism. Central to this emergence of management, and exemplified by F.W. Taylor and Elton Mayo, is a desire to undermine the ‘independence of the craft worker’ and replace him³ with the ‘mass worker’ (Hanlon, 2016: 4). This inaugurated an increase in personal *dependency* for workers on both capital and management. In turn, this undermined the American ideal of *independence* that dominated in the 19th century and, we would argue, the very possibility of workers’ responsibility for their work. The loss of craft skill, and the collective authority of guilds, also destroyed the main countervailing authority against abstract management because ‘technical skill essentially creates alternative forms of authority to management hierarchy’ (Hanlon, 2016: 8).

The use of ‘alternative’ here points to an irony in Hanlon’s reading of management. In practice, the resistance of workers and their ‘alternative’ authority is the status quo against which the managerial revolution pits itself. This reactive nature of management is central to Hanlon’s analysis of management as an attempt to control the creativity of workers as they invent new modes of self-organising, for example the Trades Union in the period of the mass industrial worker. In this light, management is a response to, and assault upon, the autonomy of the craft-worker and their established authority. Management, as a social group and as a body of knowledge, develops principally as a means of removing responsibility and control from workers. This process is not ameliorated, but intensified under Mayo’s Human Relations school, and later Human Resource Management (HRM). These developments do not redirect or humanise management’s basic logic but extend it beyond a concern with behaviour to focus on workers’ subjectivity as an object of management control. At its core, then, management is an attempt to reduce worker autonomy, constraining the ends, if not always the means (Friedman, 1977), to which workers can organise, and directing organization towards externally imposed goals. This is the case whether the practices of management are orientated towards the interests of owners, themselves or, as in the case of State Socialism, the political objectives of the party⁴. Without autonomy, responsibility is impossible.⁵ Real responsibility entails the power to do otherwise but management appropriates responsibility from workers, even as it defers its own responsibility to a set of increasingly institutionalised practices. Management itself, therefore, is founded upon reducing the autonomy and responsibility of workers. It is a process of deresponsibilization.

³ The masculine pronoun is used here because historically the craft guilds were male dominated institutions, and this changed little in the transition in the period of the mass-worker, if we understand this through the Fordist paradigm, with a breadwinner wage for a predominantly male workforce (cf. Cockburn, 1991)

⁴ Lenin was, famously, a big fan of F.W. Taylor’s principles of scientific management (Braverman, 1974).

⁵ It is for another paper to consider the psychological impacts on workers of management devolving responsibility without autonomy, thereby placing employees in a kind of double bind (cf Bateson, 2000).

This argument goes further than claiming management is irresponsible or, as we argued in the last section, that management's responsibilities are structurally limited. Irresponsibility is a passive process, a sloughing off of management's wider responsibilities for the consequences of its actions. If we limit our critique of contemporary management to its irresponsibilities then it might make sense to argue that management should be more responsible and be held accountable for their actions. Following Hanlon, our argument here goes further. We are claiming that management actively takes responsibility from others: from the masses, for their own political direction; from workers, for their own actions and expertise. Management removes responsibility from other subordinates and sequesters it within a hierarchical form of command and control. Even if we extend managerial responsibilities then this would also extend this underlying drive towards deresponsibilization. Management is fundamentally a process of de-responsibilization and, as such, is incompatible with humanistic values of democracy and autonomy. This de-responsibilization, like the irresponsibilities reviewed in the previous section, results ultimately from the institution of private property so that radical economic alternatives are required if management, or better 'organization', is to become responsible in any meaningful sense. In the rest of this chapter we examine alternatives to management: modes of organization that focusing on democratic control as a means of achieving collective responsibility *and* autonomy. First we examine democratic control in workers' cooperatives before briefly considering commons, and commoning, as alternatives to private property. Both are offered up as examples of the wide range of ways of organizing other than through management (cf. Parker *et al.*, 2014).

Worker's Control as Re-responsibilization

This section provides an example of re-responsibilisation addressing the issues laid out above: the subordination of labour to capital under the instruction of management and the resulting delimitation of 'responsibility'. It does so by using the example of workers' cooperatives:

[...] trading enterprises, owned and run by the people who work in them, who have an equal say in what the business does, and an equitable share in the wealth created from the products and services they provide. (Banton *et al.*, 2012: 1)

Cooperatives extend autonomy and responsibility to all employees, who organize their activities collectively. This goes beyond the kinds of 'responsible autonomy' that make workers responsible for the means of achieving management's goals, but without any autonomy to determine those goals (Friedman, 1977). In a cooperative, the goals of organizing are collectively determined, as well as the means. To examine this in more detail

we draw on data collected by one of the authors⁶ in two worker cooperatives: Beanies Wholefoods and Regather Trading Cooperative.

Beanies is a small, community shop established in 1986 to promote whole, organic and locally grown foods. At the time of the study it had seven full-time members, one part-time bookkeeper and six to eight part-time staff. The research used participant-observation, including part-time work in the shop between 2009 and 2013, and a second period of formalised research from November 2014 to October 2015, including volunteering in the shop and attending meetings.

Our second case is Regather, set up in 2010 with the mission to:

(...) give people the choice and opportunity to live, work and play co-operatively and create a mutual local economy. (Regather, March 2016)

Their aim is the creation of meaningful work and the relief of unemployment through events organising, food projects, low carbon economies and social enterprise support. Beyond this, members aspired to create a ‘real social hub’ and ‘centre for social action in the area’ (Rachel⁷). During the research, Regather had 15 active members contributing to project delivery and participating in decision-making. The research involved active membership of Regather between 2010 and 2013, followed by a second period of formalised research from 2014 to 2016.

There is a debate over the extent to which cooperatives offer a genuine alternative to capitalist management, mostly focussed on self-exploitation and ‘degeneration’ arising from external, market pressures facing these enterprises (Marx, 1866, cited in Lebowitz, 2003: 89; Cornforth, 1995). Our focus on workers’ cooperatives here is not to argue that they are a perfectly formed alternatives to management, but that they can be understood as *pre-figuring* an alternative form of autonomy and responsibility. Despite being enmeshed with capitalist managerialism, cooperatives have the potential to ‘create the new inside of the shell of the old’ (Vieta, 2014: 784): a ‘new’ in which workers are ‘co-responsible for the economic realm as well as for their own reproduction as human beings’ (*ibid.*: 785). This reproduction of ‘human beings’ is not just the reproduction of labour-power but a radical process of autonomisation through which workers engage with and move beyond experiences of subordination and managerialism (Gibson-Graham, 2006: xxvi; Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). To illustrate this potential, we now turn to concrete examples from Beanies and Regather, arguing that cooperatives’ refusal of the profit motive, and of members’ reduction, to human capital, created opportunities for re-responsibilisation.

⁶ Kiri Langmead

⁷ First names are used to indicate participants in the research.

'I felt quite removed from my work': experiences of de-responsibilisation in the capitalist system

Talking about their journeys to cooperative working, members often described their past experiences in traditionally managed organisations. Tim explained how working for the Environment Agency left him feeling 'quite removed from the work and the ramifications of [his] daily tasks.' This disconnection from the purpose and meaning of work was also articulated by Jake who expressed his discomfort at working for the Health and Safety Executive, at a time when they were 'doing more [and more] commercial work, [...] mostly for oil companies and their suppliers.' Describing the oil companies as 'evil' because of the damage their industry does to the environment, Jake's desire for ecologically responsible work clashed with management's foreclosure of a collective dialogue over the organization's ethical responsibilities. In both cases, collective responsibility is subordinated to hierarchical authority.

Nicole expanded on this disconnection between working practices and collective responsibility by reflecting on her experiences working for a large, corporate music venue:

[After 4 years it] became clear to me [that the corporate music venue] had very little interest in Sheffield as a city nor in its people or local economy, and that my role offered me little or no opportunity to influence this. I felt more and more of my energy was being spent simply helping to make some already wealthy people become even wealthier.

This focus on making money eclipsed the company's responsibilities for the community in which it was embedded. The result was to profit *from* but not contribute *to* the reproduction of the context creating the social and cultural capital upon which it depended.

In each of these cases, participants' experiences of de-reponsibilisation drove them to reject 'top down management' (Rachel), making a 'positive decision to reject the system' (Gareth) and embrace the opportunity cooperatives provided for collective self-determination. As the following examples show, by rejecting a narrow profit motive, and adopting practices of collective ownership and self-determination, workers were able to reunite thought and action, and reclaim responsibility.

Reclaiming responsibility for the environment

The following example shows how Beanies' horizontal structure enabled members to reclaim collective responsibility for the environment through deliberation. Discussing their choice of energy supplier, members questioned the economic logic of adopting the cheapest supplier by introducing ethical concerns more commonly confined to the domestic sphere. The following exchange from a members' meeting illustrates this point.

Mark: I will just put in ethical energy suppliers into google and see what comes up.

Dave: At the end of the day we have to keep the business afloat.

Mark: But then if you move away from that you are not...

Rocky: Some of the ethical ones have not so obvious tangible benefits as well.

Like I use Good Energy at home...

Mark: Yes, that's it, we use Good Energy.

*Rocky: A lot of people who work here use these ethical things but then through the business, that is **your business** collectively, [you are] using these horrible corporates that build nuclear power stations and destroy the planet.*

The cooperative form enabled the members to take collective responsibility for decisions made at work, as the interests of the organization *is* the interests of the members. This is necessarily a situated ethics that, while constrained by the need to 'keep the business afloat', consciously foregrounds a shared responsibility for the decisions made in that context. In a cooperative, a 'worker owner occupies and *produces* the work space as both owner and manager of her thinking, moving, labouring body' (Cornwell, 2012: 730, emphasis added) so ethical considerations, and the full spectrum of values, enter into organizational decision making, rather than being constrained to the private sphere of non-work. In this space, the logic of ecological sustainability was in dialogue with the logic of cost-saving and profit, not subordinated to it or excluded, thereby creating the conditions necessary for reclaiming environmental responsibility.

Reclaiming responsibility for reproduction of labour power

For management, just as employees' ethical values and practices are positioned outside the workplace, so too is the reproduction of their labour power, which is individualised and located in the private sphere of personal, rather than collective, responsibility. Time to recover, consume, and participate in activities that enable the continued engagement in wage-labour thus become, at once, non-work time and an 'appendage of capital' (Clever, 2000: 121 see also Parker et al., 2014a: 24). In such a context, wellbeing and work-life balance are about securing future productivity as labour-power: an investment in an individualised, competitive *human capital*, comprehensible only in subordination to the purpose of ongoing capital accumulation (Fleming, 2017; Spicer and Cederstrom, 2015). In contrast, a workers' cooperative locates work and employment in the context of a wider human *being*. A good example of this is 'flexibility', which for management usually means employees being flexible in relation to the demands of the business. In Beanies and Regather this was inverted:

Another key aspect of working at Regather was the ambition to find something flexible. My lifestyle, mainly in relation to my music profession, affords me with quite a bit of flexibility that I'm able to provide employers. In return, I too require

that from my employer and Regather being okay with this is a key part of the decision to keep on with the work here.

Flexibility was afforded to Tim by Regather, not for the purpose of reducing costs, but as part of mutually beneficial relationship: fitting work into life. For Tim ‘life has always been about music’ and as such, having the time to pursue his profession as a musician is central to his being a fulfilled human being. For Regather, the development of Tim’s skills, creativity and networks enriches and supports their events programme and contributes to their identity as a ‘community hub’. This identity in turn contributed to Tim’s reproduction, making him feel ‘*close to the action*’ and part of a supportive and vibrant community, and to shape its aesthetic and ethical values through his own lifestyle commitments and values. Having ownership over both Regather’s activities and his embodied capabilities enabled Tim to integrate work and life, disrupting the work-life dichotomy in such a way that his reproduction was not subordinated to an instrumentalised, abstract labour power (see also Kokkinidis, 2015: 858; Young and Schwartz, 2012; Holloway, 2005; Atzeni and Vieta, 2014). Tim’s reproduction as a *human being*, rather than *human capital*, became the collective responsibility of the cooperative rather than externalised or individualised.

Tim’s is a very neat case because his commitment to music complements his role as an events coordinator. Less obvious was Evan, a member of Beanies who described how ‘*having two kids*’ had constrained his flexibility in relation to paid work. While Evan described ‘feeling bad’ about not being able to cover certain shifts, his colleagues were understanding and accommodating. Reflecting on this Evan explained:

That’s another reason why being part of a coop is great, having [a] discussion and people being so helpful in that kind of way. And considerate. In a normal job I would be really struggling to fit my [ideal] hours in.

The discussions referred to by Evan in this quote were about the shift rota through which members mutually negotiated and adjusted their working hours to balance needs, skills and preferences. This process is fundamentally different from the zero hours, flexible or part time work increasingly offered by capitalist organisations in two ways. First, the purpose of flexibility was not to increase profit but to enable workers to accommodate work into life. This was emphasised by members during a discussion of whether to reduce the shop’s evening opening hours, in which the revenue made between the hours of 6 and 8pm took second place to concerns with workers’ well-being. As Dave explained:

[Let’s just be aware that] it’s about enjoyment of our job and we work for ourselves so we can determine our work environment. Profit is important but not the only thing.

Such decisions were not imposed on members but collectively negotiated for the mutual benefit of the members and concerned with the reproduction of a full life, rather than just the reproduction of future labour power. By bringing reproduction into discussions of organizing production, the responsibility for fellow members having a good life was collectivised, rather than just another HR initiative.

Reclaiming responsibility for the general intellect

These examples also illustrate how workers' cooperatives can generate a collective responsibility for the maintenance of the general intellect. In Tim's case, Regather created opportunities for him to develop the skills, networks and creativity required for his role as events coordinator, contributing to the maintenance of localised networks and knowledge upon which the organisation depends. Regather was also active in providing affordable work space and business support to social entrepreneurs. Over the six years of research Regather invested time and money into a record label, an early years child care provider, various food businesses, a bike maintenance scheme, and a brewing venture. These projects were also supported by skills development and knowledge transfer, often through lengthy processes of trial and error (see also Cameron, 2009; Chatterton, 2010). In each case, Regather shared the project's risk, weighing up the potential financial cost and benefits with the contribution it would make to the wider community it is situated in. Whilst some projects failed, others have contributed to the local ecology of social entrepreneurship, fostering the social networks and localised expertise that Regather depends upon.

This form of investment is more than enlightened self-interest. The structures of cooperative ownership and decision making enable a collective form of responsibility by investing surpluses not to generate more profit, but as a 'means of enacting social commitments' (Cameron, 2009: 102; Miller, 2013). Describing what constitutes success, Rachel outlines her desire for Regather to become:

[...] a centre for social action in the area. Empowering people to take action on things that they are passionate about and having our own funds to be able to support that, that are independently generated from our own trading activities...to be generating profits that are set aside to support other local people to make their projects possible.

This development of 'social action' skills and knowledge was understood as an end in itself: a means through which people could be empowered to create work that is 'morally just and beneficial to humanity and the planet' (Fran). The creation of such work enabled others to reclaim autonomy and responsibility for the products and consequences of their labour, not only members of the cooperative.

By regaining control over the labour process, workers' cooperatives remove the need for *management* to mediate between owners and workers (Lebowitz, 2003: 88). By democratising ownership and control, there is no external interest for management to be responsible to, therefore no need for management other than self-organization (de Peuter and Dyer-Witherford, 2010). As many cooperatives are held in-trust, so co-operators cannot simply sell out their shares for personal profit, this model also removes the motivation to accumulate found in capitalist businesses. Cooperatives turn ownership and control into a collective responsibility *for* the maintenance, sustainability, and development of a property held in common, rather than individualised rights and control *over* property. Rather than understanding this as a form of responsible management, we would argue that this is not management at all but an alternative form of organization that might be better understood as *commoning*.

Commoning and the Governance of the Commons

These cooperatives present an alternative to management because they are founded on collective ownership, an idea with a long tradition in the UK, in which commons were a part of everyday life at least until the start of the enclosure acts in the early 1600s. In his book *Omnia Sunt Communia*, Massimo De Angelis (2017) develops a concept of the commons that goes beyond the idea of a commonwealth, however. While both conventional and critical (eg Hardt and Negri, 2009) conceptions of the commons focus on collective ownership and access to resources - a common-*wealth* - De Angelis expands this conception to understand commons as 'social systems that include also commoners (the social subjects) and the activity of doing in common, or commoning' (De Angelis, 2017: 18). In so doing, he presents a model of social organization that includes both production and reproduction. The commons thus incorporates, but goes beyond, the question of legal property rights.

To claim ownership is not simply a question of defining property rights in the legal sense. A plurality that claims ownership of one or more use values is one that, in different forms, given situations and contexts, not only uses or accesses that use value, but also governs its production and reproduction, its sustainability and development. (De Angelis, 2017: 30)

As a model of collective self-determination, commoning differs from management. Through collective ownership and responsibility, the two-fold character of the commons comes into focus: it is both 'a use-value for plurality [and] requires a plurality claiming and sustaining the ownership of the common good' (De Angelis, 2017: 30). This contrasts with the individualised, and exclusive conceptions of property rights underpinning management. As we argued earlier, management individualises responsibility and separates the right to use from responsibility for reproduction. This separation allows management to externalise responsibility for the reproduction of its conditions of possibility: labour power, the general intellect, and the environment. In cooperatives and commoning, the collective claim to use-

rights is tied to a collective responsibility for sustainable reproduction. Social responsibility is a precondition of access and ownership, not something to be minimised and externalised.

This difference hinges on the substantive values pursued in production. For management, substantive values are irrelevant. The primary concern is to maximise value, whatever it is, reducing all values to commensurable measures, as when the environment is given a financial value in the triple-bottom line. In this measurement, efficiency is gained as an instrumental rationality dominates substantive value rationalities. The values governing production under management is thus always external to the producers and imposed on them from above, through hierarchical authority relations (De Angelis, 2017: 32). For commoners, in contrast, organizing has a purpose. It is *for* substantive values like social justice, conviviality, and ecological sustainability (*ibid.*: 31). As Tim, Jake and Nicole articulated when reflecting on their experiences of managerial working practices, it is only through the complete abstraction of substantive values, usually translated into the infinitely plastic exchange value of money, that managerial de-responsibilisation and exploitation are possible. This is a fantasy of a universal, but ultimately empty, *value-form*, which a *generic* managerial expertise is applied to maximising. In contrast, the commons are always specific and localised: the concrete use values of this common-good; the social values developed through the collective governance of commoning; and the specific social-subjects – the commoners – reproduced through those practices.

If this seems a little abstract, let us return to Hanlon's example of the craft guild. We can understand craft in terms of commons. The exchange value of products in the craft system is collectively determined, with a price scale set by the guild. This prevents producers from undercutting prices and ensures that production remains viable *for the producers*. Access to knowledge and markets is also governed by the guild, so that the right to use craft skills requires guild membership, and a commitment to the on-going reproduction and self-regulation of the craft. This is as much concerned with reproducing the collective social values, subjectivities, and community, as it is about the control of actual products. It is located in 'a dense cultural, social and affective lattice [that] defines the costs and benefits of participation or absence from the activity' (De Angelis, 2017: 23). In short, commoning is a horizontal practice of participative self-organization and collective self-determination, both of production and social reproduction, an alternative to the vertical, hierarchical practices of management, where production is determined by managers who serve the interests of the principle. Commoning, as seen in the self-organization of workers cooperatives, thus offers a form of collective responsibility that contrasts with managerial de-responsibilisation.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this collection, the editors look toward a vision of 'responsible management' in which can eventually drop the word 'responsible' because responsibility has

become a taken-for-granted aspect of ‘normal’ management. In contradiction, we have suggested that responsibility is impossible until we drop ‘management’. As a concrete mode of organization, formed in the context of actually existing capitalist enterprise, management is constitutively irresponsible, and actively seeks to deresponsibilise employees. To reclaim meaningful responsibility, we have argued, requires that democratic autonomy and collective self-organization replace managerial hierarchy in the workplace, and that private ownership and interests are replaced by collective stewardship of the commons and negotiated interests.

If this sounds radical, consider the context in which we are writing. Over the course of drafting the final version of this chapter London was brought to a stand-still by the Extinction Rebellion, as the ‘externalities’ of industrial capitalism threaten the future of human existence, and other species die out daily. The UK’s Labour Party have declared a national ‘environment and climate emergency’ and school pupils, inspired by Greta Thunberg, have been striking to force governmental action. The irresponsibilities of management appear to have brought us to a planetary breaking point so clearly something needs to change. During the last week of editing, however, Richer Sounds – a UK hifi retailer - was handed over by its founder to workers control and ownership, suggesting that other models of organization are gaining increased traction in the public imagination. As our empirical examples from worker cooperatives shows, to act responsibility is possible here and now. It does not require waiting for the abolition of private property in some utopian future world. Our examples demonstrate that:

commoning can take place with any form of property [...] enclosed and unmanaged resources can be commoned not by changing ownership but by changing how access, use, benefit, care and responsibility occur. (Gibson-Graham *et al.*, 2013: 6)

This potential suggests several areas for future research, bringing the responsible management literature together with work on alternative organizing. First, it is well established that cooperatives have their own limits to responsibility. In his work on Mondragon, for example, Cheney explores the tension between managing a business effectively, and responsibilities for suppliers and contractors within the company’s supply chain. While Beanies were concerned with the ethics of their electricity supply, total responsibility will never be possible as the links between organizations are global in range, and almost impossible to fully map. Understanding the limits to responsibility in cooperatives, and the different forms that cooperatives take, could help us to understand where cooperation can foster responsibility, and where it cannot.

Secondly, we have painted a stark picture of *management*. In much of the literature on cooperatives, the concept of self-management is used. Whilst we prefer the term self-organization, further work is required to clearly distinguish what in management is essential, and what is accidental. As writers like Ennals (2014) have suggested, working relations are changing, and industrial democracy is back on management’s agenda. Future research could

examine how far alternative practices of organizing can be incorporated into management, without transforming it into something else.

A third, and parallel, area of future research would build upon Painter-Morland's (2011) observation that 'responsibility' can be understood in multiple ways. In this chapter we have focussed on a combination of 'accountability' (for externalities) and agency relating to 'role responsibilities', arguing that these function together, with 'management' distributing them in damaging ways. What we have not considered is the idea of responsibility as 'a character trait, i.e., when we call someone a "responsible" person' (Painter-Morland, 2011: 83). This raises the question of how we can recruit, retain, and develop 'responsible' subjects into an organization. Without subjects willing to take collective responsibility, a cooperative will not function effectively, but this requires a willingness to cooperate and collectively develop our capacities as commoners. In very practical terms this raises questions about how cooperatives deal with issues of recruitment and performance management. Does recruitment of like-minded cooperators work against a wider social responsibility for diversity and inclusion, for example? And how can non-cooperative behaviours be managed when they do emerge? This, we feel, is a particularly fecund area for future research exploring the role of HRM in cooperatives.

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