Layers of Dissent: The Meaning of Time Appropriation

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Abstract

Within Critical Management Theory as well as Critical Theory the possibility of individuals resisting taken for granted power asymmetries remains a highly debated subject. Intensified corporate culture programs seem to imply that within the sphere of labor, worker dissent is loosing ground. Based on a large interview material of critical cases, this notion is challenged. The interviewees mainly represent white-collar employees who spend more than half of their working hours on private activities. Studying the objectives and political ambitions behind their extensive recalcitrance reveals a range of intentional structures that result in the same activity: time appropriation. First, time appropriation may be the effect of framed dissent*; a dissent intertwined with politically framed indignation. Second, the recalcitrance may spring from* direct dissent *in which personal indignation is the driving force whereas political formulations are not as prominent. Third, the activity of not doing your work while at work can be the effect of* withdrawal *in which case there is no motive other than avoiding work. Fourth, time appropriation may also be a (sometimes involuntary) consequence of* adjustment*: This occurs when the employee does not receive enough work assignments to fill the working day. I conclude by suggesting that the processes and leaps between these layers of dissent should be further studied.*

In its initial phase, Critical Management Studies (CMS) were chiefly concerned with demonstrating how modern workplaces are governed by efficiently running disciplinary systems that absorb the whole personality of employees and by means of unobtrusive control manage to colonize subjectivity. These tendencies, CMS scholars would argue, nearly eliminate the possibilities of workers to resist the power asymmetries inherent in the employment relation (see Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Collinson & Ackroyd, 2005; Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995 for critical reviews). Yet parallel to the advance of this school, intriguing statistics on the occurrence of "cyberslacking" or "time appropriation" have been presented in different reports according to which office employees in average spend 1,5 to 3 hours a day on private affairs during working hours (Blanchard & Henle, 2008; Blue et al., 2007; Bolchover, 2005; Carroll, 2007; Jost, 2005; Lim & Teo, 2005;

Malachowski & Simonini, 2006; J. E. Mills et al., 2001; Rothlin & Werder, 2007). Employee dissent thus seems to be a widespread phenomenon; but what conclusions can we draw from this phenomenon concerning the issue of the colonized subject? In this article, I propose a heterogeneous notion of dissent based on 43 interviews with employees who are deeply engaged in the practice of time appropriation.

In the first part of the article, I discuss the pessimism that dominated CMS in the early 1990s and the critique it received, notably from Thompson and Ackroyd (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995). I trace its historical roots and put the issue in a theoretical context that concerns the whole project of Critical Theory. Questions are then raised around the concept of dissent and its undertheorized heterogeneity. In the second part, I attempt to answer these questions by suggesting a typology of different vocabularies of dissent that underlie the practice of time appropriation. This typology is empirically grounded in the interview material. As I will argue, dissent may not always be politically framed in the sense that Critical Theorists wish for. Dissent is not an "either-or" phenomenon; rather, there is a variety of oppositional vocabularies that differ on several levels that will be presented and analyzed under each type of dissent.

Critical Management Studies and the colonized subject

With the emergence of CMS, a relatively new school combining Critical Theory with Organizational Studies, features of post-Fordism (such as Human Resource Management, Just-In-Time production and Total Quality Management) have been critically studied with special attention to disciplinary power. Reoccurring themes from this school of study include the "reskilling" of post-industrial labor that goes hand-in-hand with intensified indoctrination fuelled by corporate culture programs (e.g. Adler, 2007; Alvesson, 1996; Willmott, 1993), the globalization of the labor market and increasing precariousness (Allvin, 2006; Banerjee et al., 2009; Vosko, 2000), subtle forms of panoptic electronic surveillance (e.g. Barker, 1993; Casey, 1995) discursive control and identity regulation (Grant et al., 2009; Thomas, 2009) that all in all force employees to work harder than ever.[1] In these critical, albeit pessimistic observations that eventually grew in number during the 1990s, the effectiveness and power of new managerial regimes were often stated in the most totalizing portrayals that made employees appear as brainwashed automatons, as victims of the "hegemonic despotism" that Burawoy (1985) once criticized, and as evidence of the complete incorporation and colonization of subjectivity: "While new forms of resistance are made possible" Deetz (1992) argued, "they are also made less likely by the complicity and new form of surveillance" (p. 39). Casey (1999), summarizing one of his own studies, accordingly asserted that "resistance and opposition are virtually eliminated" (p. 175) which, regarding the prospects for subjectivity, entailed that "the modern subject willingly reproduces prevalent relations of domination and exploitation" (Willmott, 1993, p. 520).

In their influential work on "organizational misbehavior" Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) addressed what they believed was a widespread negligence of worker resistance within the sociology of work, primarily emanating from CMS scholars such as Barker (1993), Casey (see also 1995), du Gay (1991, 1993), Kunda (1992), Ray (1986), Townley (1993) and

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[1] Softer versions of this theory might also be found in late modern classics such as Bauman (2004), Hochschild (1983) and Sennett (1998).

Sewell and Wilkinson (1992). According to Thompson and Ackroyd (1999), the "Foucauldian turn" with its emphasis on the primacy of discourse, also provided a further theme amongst these theorists, namely "the cultural mechanisms for smothering dissent and colonizing the employee [and] new techniques of incorporation of personnel" (p. 151).

Their critique is based on two main arguments. First, there is vast evidence against the general idea that worker counter-control has been effectively eliminated. Historically, there are a number of empirical studies of workplace resistance and time appropriation in particular, stretching back to the anarchist writings of Pouget on the practice of "sabotage" (Pouget, 1913 [1898]) to the lament of "soldiering" (or foot-dragging) by Taylor (2004 [1911]) and after the breakthrough of Taylorism to the more systematic workplace ethnographies of Roy (1952), Lupton (1963), Edwards (1986), Ditton (1977), Mars (1982), and Scullion and Edwards (1982) just to mention a few. Contemporary evidence that time appropriation can be exercised under the most oppressive working conditions of "post-Fordism" has also been provided by Bouquin (2008), Huzell (2005), Mulholland (2004), Pollert (1996), Sprouse (1992) Townsend (2005) and others to which we will return later in this study.

Secondly, Thompson and Ackroyd argue that the pessimistic orthodoxy, despite focusing on delicate phenomena such as "corporate culture" (Ray, 1986) and "concertive control" (Barker, 1993), has restrained radical scholars from recognizing more subtle expressions of employee dissent such as irony, humor and covert skepticism. As we shall later see, the interest in these practices grew into a popular theme in the aftermath of Thompson and Ackroyd's critique.

Critical Theory and the death of the subject

"We need to recognize that a central reason why the main trend has been towards the marginalization of misbehavior is the shift in radical theory to Foucauldian and post-structuralist perspectives" (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999, p. 150). The critique of Foucauldian doctrines is a reoccurring feature in Ackroyd and Thompson's account; discussing "resistance" within a framework that already has denied the possibility of an autonomous subject becomes futile, they argue: "because power is everywhere and nowhere, the impression can be given that it is a force from which there can never be any escape" (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995, p. 625). Foucault's doctrine that power and resistance are inseparable has not stimulated scholars within the field to discern various forms of resistance that, according to the doctrine, ought to prevail at the workplace.

Whether this bias in observation stems from the Foucauldian notion of power rather than empirical observation will here be left to discussion. Fleming and Sewell's argument, that these assertions are founded on a "tendentious reading of Foucault's texts" (Fleming & Sewell, 2002, p. 858), may well be in the right (see also Fleming, 2001). There is, however, another heritage of literature mourning the loss of the subject that Thompson and Ackroyd fail to address – a long discussion to which the phenomenon of organizational misbehavior is not without relevance. According to the two major representatives of CMS, Alvesson and Willmott (2003), for early contributors to CMS "the tradition of Critical Theory, established in Frankfurt in the 1930s [was] the chief, though by no means exclusive, inspiration" (p. 2). They also mention "Horkheimer, Benjamin Adorno, Marcuse, Fromm and, most recently, Jürgen Habermas" (ibid.).

Unfortunately, these are names that are seldom mentioned when the theoretical foundation of CMS is scrutinized. A brief look at the formulation and subsequent critique of the early Frankfurt centered pessimism will here serve to narrow down the most fundamental issues that are re-actualized in the current debate on employee dissent.

While not denying the possibility of human agency a priori, Critical Theory has also in the German tradition been largely pessimistic as for the prospects of a free subject resisting the repressions of late capitalism.[2] Especially at the heart of the early Frankfurt School lies the assumption that adaptation to labor is increasingly becoming the meta-function of all social institutions. Yet in contrast to more orthodox Marxists, the Frankfurt philosophers lay the ground for what has become the overarching theme of most Critical Theory, namely the critique of consumption. Rather than studying the power structures at the workplace, Critical Theorists have been more interested in studying their reflection in other areas of everyday life – for instance as in Adorno's controversial analysis of jazz as an entertainment repetition of the factory drill (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002 [1944], p. 101) or in Marcuse's notion of repressive desublimation, i.e. the development of an illusively liberated sexuality that is increasingly tied to the rationality of domination (Marcuse, 1991 [1964], p. 62).[3]

The study of these other fields where the Frankfurt School has been a major influence has, however, resulted in more optimistic currents of thought – partly as a reaction against the early Frankfurt philosophers, but more and more as schools on their own. Descending from post-Sartrean existentialism, Touraine (1968, 1983) initiated the social movement theory attaching major importance to social movements appearing outside the traditional labor movement as evidence of critical consciousness in what he otherwise terms the "programmed society" (1971).[4] Concerning the issue of the culture industry, the field of

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[2] Albeit very heterogeneous and historically context dependent, parts of the vocabulary stemming from Critical Theory may illustrate this point. Particularly among the first generation of the Frankfurt School, classic concepts within sociological theory such as the alienation theory of Marx (1988 [1844]), the rationalization theory of Weber (1989) and the reification theory of Lukács (1971 [1923]) were adopted and given a darker tone while linked to the cruelties of the Second World War. For instance, *One-Dimensional Man* by Marcuse (1991 [1964]) portrays a picture of the modern man as a completely assimilated person whose main object is to satisfy false needs stimulated by consumerism and adapt to the alienating work of Taylorism without any inclination towards critical thought or oppositional behavior (the second dimension). This pessimistic analysis is repeated and even deeper in the writings of Adorno (2005 [1974]) where notions such as the "amorphous and malleable mass" (p. 139), the "line of least resistance" (p. 57) of "standardized and organized human units" (p. 135) are presented. More typical is the notion of "the death of the subject." This notion has a twofold meaning depending on its German or French adaption. Foucault (1977, 1989) is most known for it in his depiction of human beings as empty bottles, ready to be filled by discourses that reflect the power structure of society. The Foucauldian theory of the dead subject - that reoccurs in Baudrillard (1994), Deleuze (1988) and many others - is, ironically, more essentialist than that of Adorno who instead of describing it in ontological terms, sees the death as a historical process – which makes it all the more horrifying and yet leaves open for a "reawakening" (see Hawkes, 1996, pp. 182-88 for a discussion).

[3] See Heller (1990, pp. 61-79) for an analysis of various "death of the subject" narratives.

[4] Touraine is, in fact, one of the most explicit critics of the Frankfurt school. Commenting on Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* where the end of critical consciousness is proclaimed, he exclaims: "How can you not observe that this book was published in 1964, the same year the

cultural studies has been very concerned with media-reception theory since the emergence of the Birmingham School (cf. Hall, 1990; Skeggs & Wood, 2008; Wood, 2005) whereas sexual repression and micro-resistance constitute one of the most debated subjects within feminist studies (cf. Greer, 2006; Solanas, 1997). In great (and sometimes excessive) detail, these disciplines have managed to bear empirical evidence of a notion once presented by Lefebvre (1991 [1958]): even if behaviors of everyday life undeniably are subject to domination and passivity, they nevertheless "contain within themselves their own spontaneous critique of the everyday" (p. 40).

The most serious attempt to collect these practices in a universal anthropology has been offered by Scott whose main thesis is that we, often under the facade of blind obedience, practice advanced forms of micro-resistance that together form an inevitable part of social reality; or as he poetically puts it: "Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, thousands upon thousands of petty acts of insubordination and evasion create a political and economic barrier reef of their own" (Scott, 1989, p. 20). Scott collects these "petty acts" in a wide range of cultural (but seldom workplace related) settings and uses them to explicitly criticize the idea that oppressed groups internalize the values of their oppressors (the "thick theory of false consciousness") or that they either way give in to naturalization and resignation when faced with what they perceive as an unchangeable system (the "thin theory of false consciousness") (Scott, 1991, p. 72).

This critique represents the extreme opposite to the somberness of early Critical Theory and has, on good grounds, been criticized in its turn. Lukes (2005) argues that Scott uses an exceptionally interpretative method in his analysis of folkloric symbols and that his focus on the historically most oppressed groups in the world may not necessarily be generalizable to societies where power is more manipulative. More importantly he comments that Scott's "either-or" terminology makes the discussion as simplistic as ever before: "[T]he alternatives of 'consent' and 'resignation' look like a hopelessly impoverished schema for describing and explaining the gamut of the remaining human responses to conditions of powerlessness and dependence" (p. 132). In addition, one could remark that a differentiation between different types of dissent is equally lacking in Scott's account.

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student movement broke out with the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley and in the beginning of a decade that was going to be marked, in US and in other nations, by the campaigns for the civil rights for blacks, for the equality of women, against the Vietnam war and by huge risings of students. That these movements were inspired by Critical Theory and the structuralist Marxism of Althusser in particular does not prevent their action, often in contradiction to their consciousness, from demonstrating that mass society has not eliminated the social actors" (Touraine, 1992, p. 189, my translation). By pointing out the existence of social movements, Touraine tries to reclaim the social actor. However, this particular criticism is not properly justified since Marcuse, more than any of the other members of the Frankfurt school (cf. Alway, 1995, p. 97; Feenberg, 1999, p. 153), was very aware of and even actively involved in the countermovement which is why he dedicated one of his books to these "young militants" who "know or sense that what is at stake is simply their life, the life of human beings which has become a plaything in the hands of politicians and managers and generals" (Marcuse, 1972, p. x).

Critical Theory and the workplace

Alvesson and Willmott (2003) formulate one concern of CMS as "to recall the commitment of critical thinking in a way that makes an appeal and poses a challenge. This challenge is directed to critical thinkers, including Critical Theorists who have largely disregarded the empirical realm of management" (p. 19). Echoing both "scientific" Marxism with its rigid view of the sphere of production and the Weberian notion of bureaucracy, Critical Theorists have tended to regard the workplace as a dead sphere, governed by immovable power structures and therefore utterly immune to behavioral resistance. As part of the "system" (Habermas, 1984) or the "heteronomous sphere" (Gorz, 1982), the Critical Theory conception of work is rather to treat it as synonymous with the instrumental reason that is colonizing parts of the lifeworld that we feel should remain autonomous.

Beside a couple of attempts made by Honneth (Honneth & Ash, 1982; Honneth, 2007) to point out the "normative structures" of workplace interaction, Certeau is one of the few (Grand) theorists who, in a much wider analysis of oppositional "tactics" has paid attention to resistance practice in the sphere of production. Particularly worthy of note in the context of this study, is his analysis of a type of time appropriation that in France is called *la perruque* ("the wig"), i.e. "the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer" (Certeau, 1984, p. 25). *La perruque* is neither pilfering since no product is stolen, nor plain absence since the worker stays at the workplace. It is rather the autonomous appropriation of "time (not goods, since [the worker] uses only scraps) from the factory of work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit" (ibid.). Exemplifying this phenomenon, Certeau mentions the secretary's writing of a love letter during working hours and the cabinetmaker's borrowing a lathe for turning a piece of home furniture. A more contemporary version of *la perruque* would be the almost inevitable office employee practice of "cyberslacking," i.e. writing private emails and surfing the web during working hours – a phenomenon that according to a wide spectrum of studies is estimated to occupy between 1,5 to 3 hours of the average working day in nations such as US (Blanchard & Henle, 2008; Blue et al., 2007; Bolchover, 2005; Carroll, 2007; Jost, 2005; Malachowski & Simonini, 2006; J. E. Mills et al., 2001), Germany (Rothlin & Werder, 2007) and Singapore (Lim & Teo, 2005). To Certeau, this represents one of the clearest examples of individual manipulations of imposed spaces, or "enunciatory acts":

> In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his *work* and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family through *spending* his time in this way. (Certeau, 1984, pp. 25-26)

The meaning ascribed to time appropriation here brushes against the criticized romanticism of Scott. But varying his argument somewhat, Certeau stresses that this and other forms of micro-diversions must not be forced into a meta-narrative and assimilated to one "Voice" – "there is no unique unity among the sounds of presence that the enunciatory act gives a language in speaking it. Thus we must give up the fiction that collects all these sounds under the sign of a 'Voice,' of a 'Culture' of its own – or of the great Other's" (Certeau, 1984, p. 132).

As we shall see, even the notion of time appropriation as an "enuciatory act," or the writing of love letters and repairing home furniture as activities representing pleasurable, "free, creative" production (mildly venerating the old ideal of craftsmanship), may in fact also amount to giving the micro-diversion at hand a predetermined meaning. Time appropriation is not always a consequence of employee dissent; in some cases it may even be forced upon the employee, as an effect of organizational waste, leading to intense boredom and increased alienation. This highlights the need for empirical analysis of the structural fields and locations of agency.

Signs of dissent – but what does it mean?

Following the publication of *All Quiet on the Workplace Front?* by Thompson and Ackroyd (1995), a new interest for workplace resistance began to grow among CMS scholars. As Fleming and Spicer (2007) describe it, "according to Thompson and Ackroyd, resistance was always there, be it in the form of organized action, or subtle subversion around identity and self, with humor, sexuality and skepticism being key examples. Others soon chimed in" (p. 2). In Thompson's (2009) own account, this brief "hero-time" of workplace resistance escalated in an enthusiastic celebration of concealed "offstage gestures" (Gossett & Kilker, 2006; Korcynski, 2007; Taplin, 2006), of "cynicism" (Cooke, 2006; Fleming, 2005b, 2005a) and of "irony" (Sewell, 2008; P. Taylor & Bain, 2003; Warren & Fineman, 1997).

Fleming and Sewell (2002), inspired by *The Good Soldier, Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek, offer a typical example in their formulation of "Švejkism" – a term used for "subtle forms of subversion that are invariably 'invisible' to his superiors (and often to his peers to)" (p. 859). In their reading of resistance studies, earlier "approaches have limited the definition of resistance to formalized, organized acts, dependent upon some transcendental principle" (p. 862). The notion of "Švejkian transgressions," they argue, can help us to detect hidden forms of resistance "even under the most claustrophobic cultural hegemony" which has become all the more important now that "subjectivity is the very terrain that is being contested" (p. 863).

Since 2002, these "subtle" forms of resistance have been subject to much theoretical elaboration. This theorizing, however, has had limited value to the broader question of the supposed colonization of subjectivity at workplaces. So far, we have produced numerous examples of workplace resistance that indicate some sort of subjective dissent. But the substance of this dissent, what meaning employees attribute to their actions, remains undertheorized. As Scott asserts, the focus on the behavioral aspects of resistance risks missing much of the point:

> It reduces the explanation of human action to the level one might use to explain how the water buffalo resists its driver to establish a tolerable pace of work or why the dog steals scraps from the table. But inasmuch as I seek to understand the resistance of thinking, social beings, I can hardly fail to ignore their consciousness – the meaning they give to their acts. (Scott, 1985, p. 38)

In this article, I will use my study of time appropriation as an empirical base for further analysis of the meaning of time appropriation. No attention will here be given to the art of time appropriation as such; what interests us are the voices of the artists, the subjective

meanings recognized in this specific type of organizational resistance – *not how but why*. This will be done by means of elaborating on the different modalities of dissent.

In Collinson's and Ackroyd's book chapter *Resistance, Misbehavior, and Dissent*, dissent is distinguished from the other two in the following way:

> The title of this chapter implies a continuum of oppositional workplace practices ranging from resistance (with connotations of behavior that is overt, principled, and perhaps formally organized), through misbehavior (defined as self-conscious rule-breaking), to dissent (which foregrounds linguistic or normative disagreement). (Collinson & Ackroyd, 2005, p. 306)

To this one might add that dissent as an "oppositional workplace practice," probably is the most invisible practice of all. "Normative disagreement" can of course go unnoticed altogether – dissent is rather a conflicting state of mind that motivates but does not necessarily entail oppositional action. And just as the grounds for normative disagreement may vary on the workplace, the dissent underlying the practice of time appropriation may involve different meanings.

In recent years, CMS scholars have begun to question the celebration of employee capacity to engage in the subtle forms of resistance here described that does not put much at risk neither for employees nor for their employers (Contu, 2008; Fleming, 2009; Mumby, 2005). The meaning of dissent constitutes a considerable part of this critique. What is the dissent targeted against? Does it signify any wish to transcend the existing power structures, or is it just an indication of the employee's disenchanted wish to advance in these very structures? If the study of workplace resistance has anything of empirical value to offer the discussion of subject colonization, these questions will have to be explored.

Method

Recruitment and participants

Enquiries about time appropriation always risk putting the interviewee in a defensive position. In fact, only to participate in a study of output restriction may be conceived as utterly shameful which is why finding interviewees has been a very demanding task (cf. Anteby, 2003). The study material includes in-depth interviews with 43 employees who in average spend more than half of their working hours on private affairs such as surfing the web, writing private emails, reading, playing computer games, watching movies, sleeping etc. These true virtuosos of time appropriation have been selected through advertising made on various forums[5] and through snowball samplings with the sole criterion that they should spend a significant part of their workday on none-work. The forum advertisements gave some interviewees who were very politically articulated in relating their time appropriation (as will be seen under "framed dissent") while the snowball sampling led to those who were not as proud (but still very active) of this type of workplace resistance. The recruitment may thus have led to a significant bias in terms of representativeness, but also to great variation in the ascribed meanings of time appropriation.

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[5] Maska.nu, socialism.nu, and two facebook groups.

As the sampling fell out, I interviewed 20 women and 23 men among whom most were office employees with academic degrees, working in isolation (although not totally separated from others), mainly in the private sector and of young age (ranging between 22 and 45). Those working in teams gave very different accounts of time appropriation as will be seen in the case of "framed dissent." Exactly fourteen interviewees had service jobs (e.g. one receptionist, two security officers, four social workers), five belonged to the industrial sector (e.g. one ware-house employee, two mechanics, one factory worker), and the rest had typical office jobs in either the private or the public sector (e.g. four in the advertising business, five programmers, one allowance administrator).

It should also be noted that the study has been conducted in Sweden – a nation whose welfare system has been subject to intense deregulation and flexibilization programs since the employment crisis during the 1990s with a considerable precarization as a consequence (Marklund, 2005; Otter, 2004); also a nation that particularly during the last few years has experienced a significant decline in union membership and union activity all together (Allvin & Sverke, 2000; Kåks Röshammar, 2008; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

Research strategy

Also quite challenging was encouraging the interviewees to tell their story in their own words. Defensive attitudes on the part of the interviewees have certainly not been avoided here, but at least reduced through the use of a phenomenological-interpretive approach that attempts to understand social realities from the positions of those who are part of them (Geertz, 1973; Hycner, 1985). Unlike the traditionally participatory approach of labor process students, I used a narrative interview technique in which the interviewer after the opening question does not interfere with more questions but by verbal and non-verbal means encourages the interviewees to continue their story (cf. Turgeman-Goldschmidt, 2005). After this first narrative the interviewer tries to fill the gaps while elaborating on the main theme, here the meaning of time appropriation.

The rationale behind this relatively none-interfering strategy was to avoid interviewer effects and, more importantly, not to attach an already given "voice," as Certeau would have it, in the process of interviewing. Although this strategy was explained to the interviewee before beginning the interview, the strategy of opening with a single question ("how do you experience your work situation?") was not always successful and in some cases did not even bring the first narrative to the main issue (of time appropriation). In these cases, the interview proceeded in a semi-structural way (cf. Kvale & Torhell, 1997) while focusing on how and why the interviewees were so engaged in time appropriation, what they felt about their profession, their job (its purpose, its organization), the company they worked for and how it was managed.

To establish a frank, respectful and confidential interview environment was a key for entering into the big secret that time appropriation signifies for the majority. Whether that succeeded is an open question and the best judges are the interviewees themselves. In any case, the ambition was not to discern the interviewees' most inner feelings, but to recognize distinct motivations and explanations. The narratives were analyzed in two stages: First, I made a categorization using *ATLAS/ti,* a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (cf. Coffey et al., 1999 for a critical review), which allows the analyst to easily change and merge the battery of codes as the research process proceeds in relation to the formulation of new hypotheses, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) once suggested. Differing somewhat from the grounded theory approach, categories were then used to

reconstruct four vocabularies of motivation according to five dimensions that reappear in both interviews and other studies of resistance, organizational misbehavior and time appropriation, and which proved to be relevant when differentiating the variety of time appropriation (see table 1).

In an exceptionally theoretical essay on human motivation, Mills (1940) emphasizes how motives are more external than traditional psychology has assumed. He especially links the functions of different "vocabularies of motives" (a concept that stresses the linguistic foundation of motives) to the particular situations and actions that they are intertwined with. In this study, the action (time appropriation) is the same among the interviewees, while the vocabularies differ from each other. Table 1 depicts different interviewee motivations behind a phenomenon that have traditionally been treated as "oppositional." This typology should not be understood as a static categorization of what motivations time appropriating employees "really" have etc. As Kondo (1990) observes, employees may "consent, cope, and resist at different levels of consciousness at a single point in time" (quoted in Collinson & Ackroyd, 2005, p. 321). Furthermore, there is, as in all interview studies, no guarantee that the interviewee is speaking "the truth" or not withholding information. The typology should, however, be valid as for the narratives generated in the interviewing process.

Table 1: The motivational vocabularies of time appropriation according to different levels of analysis

	Framed dissent	Direct dissent	Withdrawal	Adjustment
Ethical dimension (Scott, 1991)	Infrapolitics	Office politics	Survival	Adjustment
Form of discontent (Morrill, Zald, & Rao, 2003; Snow & Benford, 1992)	Meta-narrative related indignation	Personal indignation	Active resignation	Passive resignation
Perceived adversary (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Scott, 1985)	The system	Penultimate links	The job	None
Perceived deprivation (Brewer & Silver, 2000; Runciman, 1966)	Relative and group-centered	Relative and ego-centered	Absolute and individual	None
Intended degree of output restriction (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999)	Sabotage	Disruption	Imperceptibility	None

Time appropriation

The typology conveys four vocabularies of motivation behind the practice of time appropriation: *framed dissent*, *direct dissent*, *withdrawal* and *adjustment*. Here, these vocabularies will be further elaborated in relation to the five dimensions of dissent. The *ethical dimension* refers to the type of interests employees have in re-appropriating company time for themselves. The *form of discontent* is decided by whether the employees show signs of indignation or of resignation and whether they contextualize their discontent or not. This dimension is deeply linked to the *perceived adversary*, i.e. whether the employee regards the source of their discontent as a structural or an individual phenomenon, or if they simply conceive of it as an aspect of the job. The *perceived deprivation* refers to whether the employees speak of their frustration in absolute or relative terms and whether they describe it as a shared experience or not. The *intended degree of output restriction* is, finally, the level at which one can analyze the external goals of the act of time appropriation, i.e. what possible changes the employees wish that their actions may lead to. In the next sections, I will present empirical examples of what these dimensions entail, describe how they differ from each other and explain why they should be considered as parts of the respective vocabularies.

Adjustment

First of all, it should be noted that time appropriation can be virtually forced upon employees and thus exempt from every vocabulary of dissent. This came as surprise in the interview process and raised questions beyond the scope of this study. Yet it is of some importance here as it exemplifies how a behavior that has traditionally been conceived of as oppositional may in fact be the exact opposite.

A popular notion that might explain part of the non-work at work is the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure (Allvin, 2006; Baxter & Kroll-Smith, 2005; Fleming, 2005a). The "electronic leash" (i.e.: information and communication technology combined with norms of constant accessibility) makes so-called knowledge workers susceptible to fall into the habit of working while not at work. Accordingly, one could expect employees to compensate this loss of time by running some private errands on the Internet while at work.[6] So are we just observing a zero-sum game resulting from a blurring of the Fordist work—non-work boundary?

While this might be the case for the majority of office employees, the theory hardly applies to the interviewees in this study. Even if many of them work at home from time to time, it is not a sacrifice that outweighs the individual appropriation of half of the working hours. Profession, position, and the opacity of the labor process are factors that heavily affect the work intensity – factors that might even create spaces of non-work at work despite the complete lack of procrastination tendencies and oppositional intentions on the part of the employee (Paulsen, 2010a). For instance, it is widely understood that "banker's hours" are and have always been shorter than the working hours of the lower classes. That

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[6] Fleming (2009) has even elaborated on this observation into the concept of *the haemorrhaging organization*: "not only has the logic of production escaped the factory walls into all parts of society as many have argued, but also the ideology of everyday life outside the firm has been transferred into the sphere of production" (p. 39).

shorter working hours are one of the more important privileges of the upper classes was first suggested by Veblen (2008 [1899]) and has more recently also been statistically established by Blanchard and Henle (2008). Hence, some of the more well-educated interviewees experience long periods each day when they do not have any work assignments. That time appropriation here becomes a form of adjustment is proved by the fact that it may arise despite the employee's wish to fully "participate" in ongoing projects. A young project leader at a banking-house who became responsible for a newly established service department illustrates this point:

> It was a great plan apart from the fact that I only had around three, four customers a day. So I had maybe half an hour's efficient work during a seven-hour working-day. So there was extremely much waste.
> >How exiting!
> No, it was terribly boring.

The boredom was in this case also an effect of the employee's wish to "fully participate" in the firm. When he took courage and addressed, what he perceived to be, "the problem" to his superior, the managerial reaction came in form of reducing his post to a part-time contract. Thus, while opposing the acclaimed identity of the industrious self-directed worker, time appropriation may nevertheless represent the adjustment to organized waste and therefore add to feelings of alienation among more ambitious employees (Bolchover, 2005; Paulsen, 2010b).

But even among less ambitious employees, low intensity can have a negative effect on both time perception – "time passes faster when you have something to do" (cf. Burawoy, 1979; Roy, 1953) – and the subjective experience of effort:

> Well, if you haven't done anything in one and half hour but cyberslacking, and then all of the sudden something turns up that you just must deal with, then it becomes like 'oh shit, what a pain in the ass.' But if you've been busy all day, then it's more like 'yeah, whatever, let's do it.'

This logistics administrator and the project leader have both fallen prey to what is sometimes called "boreout": A state of mind in which "employees are understretched, unmotivated and immeasurably bored" (Rothlin & Werder, 2007, p. 4). In accordance with the diagnosis, the latter interviewee quote demonstrates how the boredom can become comfortable and eventually a state that the employee holds on to out of convenience. Others experience the lack of work as altogether uncomfortable:

> I am a very ambitious person and to me it has always been very important to perform when at work. I want the results to be positive and I want to do a good job and to be professional. I do think I have a strong work ethic and I can work hard if needed, but when there is nothing to do it gives me bad conscience and I feel like I should do more even though I'm working more than the others. (Customer service operator)

As Bolchover (2005) (former insurance employee who writes about his years as one of the "living dead") observes, the people most likely to suffer from boreout are also the ones

most likely to be ashamed of their situation.[7] This makes the empirical research on boreout difficult. It also helps to understand that this form of time appropriation does not emanate from any form of dissent whatsoever. Here, we rather see how professional norms conflict with the organization of labor and how the employee learn to resign in the face of organizational power. Diverging from the more generalizing emphasis on the omnipresence of oppositional subjects as in Certeau (1984) and Scott (1989), we rather have the option to "become subjects" as Touraine puts it. Compliance and subordination are viable options, or to quote Gardiner (2000): "Subjecthood is not simply given to us; we must create ourselves as subjects, as purposive, responsible and self-reliant entities. If we do not make this existential 'leap', we become passive and conformist, and hence subject to external powers" (p. 156).

This passive form of resignation yet reveals a fundamental distrust in the possibility of making changes via communication with management. Boreouts are trapped in situations where the simulation has become so integrated in their daily work that speaking truth would mean nothing less than organizational suicide (cf. Adams, 1996; Maier, 2006; McKevitt, 2006 for popular descriptions of such organizations). Comparing their dissatisfaction with the more active withdrawal from labor, suggests how deep differences in work commitment can be – and also how the institution of wage labor both contain activities that are perceived as invaluable sources of meaning and other activities that cannot but be regarded as organized humiliation.

Withdrawal

Unlike adjustment, withdrawal can be described as a form of resignation that emanates out of the employee's wish to avoid work. Time appropriation is thus actively created by the employee; normally because work is perceived as such a burden that it cannot be endured for a whole working day. The distaste for work varies heavily among withdrawing employees in this study, but in contrast to the other two forms of dissent, dissatisfaction is attributed to work itself – not to its surroundings as in direct and framed dissent. There is neither overt political framing nor any personal indignation nor revenge narrative in the vocabularies of withdrawal. The common narrative is rather the need to create what Certeau (1984) would call a "utopian space" (p. 23) of free time in a milieu that is otherwise characterized by routine and coercion:

> I guess it gives a feeling of freedom. To know that 'yes, I can actually take that private call now or do that thing now' gives the feeling that you're in charge of your time. […] If I weren't able to do it, I would feel trapped. I think that a little space of freedom is what makes people stand it. I can make decisions on my own and to be able to decide on your own creates a cheerful atmosphere. (Allowance administrator)

When the burden of work becomes too heavy, it is rejected for the "space of freedom" necessary to make people stand it. As in the case of this social worker, withdrawal can be combined with high work commitment. Earlier burnout experiences and long term sick-

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[7] Or as he more forcibly puts it: "Doing nothing at work is something you only talk about to your nearest and dearest if at all, whereas people queue up to admit that they performed oral sex on a television celebrity, or to write books about their past as a vicious football hooligan" (Bolchover, 2005, p. 12).

leave have learned some employees to take it easy (though not for more than two hours a day among the interviewees belonging to this category) in order to perform better in the long run.

For others, withdrawal resembles the "Great Refusal" that Marcuse once proposed as the only viable resistance in the face of one-dimensional society. An even less political vision was formulated in the later writings of Horkheimer where he advocates the idea of "retreat" from the world in which, as Alway (1995) puts it "the moralist without belief in divine providence or in the revolutionary agency of the proletariat is left with only longing as a form of resistance" (p. 60). This melancholy was also shared by Adorno (2005 [1974]) who asserted that "[t]he best mode of conduct, in face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one: to lead a private life, as far as the social order and one's own needs will tolerate nothing else, but not to attach weight to it as to something still socially substantial and individually appropriate" (p. 39). Although they surely did not have workplace time appropriation in mind, they describe a purely negative reaction that also is adaptive since it is not aimed at making any change except for creating ego autonomy within the established order of power. Their frustration is not relative as in the case of the two forms of dissent described below; it is not formulated in relation to an ideal situation or a sense of being personally wronged (cf. Brewer & Silver, 2000; Runciman, 1966), but as a fact of life that simply has to be managed in the best possible way. The case of a ticket collector illustrates this pessimistic form of resignation:

> It's a stupid job and society would of course be better off without it. But I could say that about just about every job that I've had. So I try to get along. I've this room where I can watch movies, read, surf, and still get an income. It's what we all do here, it's the whole point of being here […] At least I don't cause any harm. It's not like I spread advertising or neglect any sick people.

The ticket collector's apology exemplifies how time appropriation can be stretched between radical narratives and the narrative of personal failure. The job as a ticket collector is "stupid" and yet better than others in the sense that it does not "cause any harm." Hence, it is the last refuge for someone who feels she or he has failed to succeed on the labor market. The joke of a young electrician also illustrates the narrative of personal failure: "If I'm still a building electrician when I'm sixty, then please shoot me." The narrative of personal failure highlights how neither management nor organization is singled out as culprits for the dissatisfaction, but work itself. The workday of a ware-house employee makes this perfectly understandable:

> You don't see any daylight for months except during weekends. You don't eat and become tired and low. It's the monotony and the understimulation and the fact that the job is completely meaningless. Each time you've cut a carton open there is a new one. And each time you've filled a shelf they empty it. And then a new carton comes some days later. Well, now it's time to fill the shelf again. Eventually you start recognizing the cartons. 15 000 items and you recognize each carton! […] I've been here for seven years now. Seven summers. It's like a nightmare.

No matter how well-organized and just both management and society were, this dreadful experience of work itself would not change. As another interviewee suggests, explaining time appropriation as a consequence of the job itself without personal or political

indignation does not have to emanate out of lack of "sociological imagination" to use C. W. Mills' (1959) term for understanding seeming "personal troubles of milieu" as "public issues of social structure" (p. 8). Despite (or perhaps because of) her being active in both parliamentary and extraparliamentary politics, she does not regard time appropriation as political action: "To me it's a purely egoistic action aimed at creating a space for the individual, you know. So I can't say that it's political action or workplace struggle." As we shall see, others ascribe opposite meanings to the very same behavior.

Hirschman's deliberately reductionist action theory presented in *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), would be hard to apply without some modification on the phenomenon of organizational time appropriation. In labor economics and management studies literature Hirschman's concept of exit usually is equated with the employee's decision to quit a job whereas the concept of voice is the ability to communicate complaints (usually through a trade union) (see Dowding et al., 2000 for a review). As Hirschman (1970) notes, management tends to "strip the members-customers of the weapons which they can wield, be they exit or voice, and to convert, as it were, what should be a feedback into a safety valve" (p. 124). Time appropriation might be regarded as such a safety valve – a valve in which we find a multitude of types of dissent. Clearly, exit does not have to be formal – we can exit an organization while still being official members of it. High unemployment, economic dependency, children to feed, are situational factors that may cause employees to grasp at this solution. Withdrawal here represents this informal type of exit that is chosen instead of formal exit. Direct dissent on the other hand, should be regarded as informal exit that is chosen instead of venting formal voice.

Direct dissent

Direct dissent originates in feelings of indignation rather than resignation. This type of dissent is not aimed at abstract targets such as "capitalism" or "work society" but at what I will here call the *penultimate links* of larger structures. According to Piven and Cloward (1977), people's experience of structural oppression is always mediated by these links which might, nevertheless, appear as structurally detached phenomena:

> [P]eople experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes, and it is the concrete experience that molds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets. Workers experience the factory, the speeding rhythm of the assembly line, the foremen, the spies, the guards, the owner, and the paycheck. They do not experience monopoly capitalism […] In other words, it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger. (Piven & Cloward, 1977, pp. 20-21)

Narratives of direct dissent, i.e. a dissent that does not talk of transcendental changes of larger structures but of such penultimate links as those mentioned in this quote, demonstrate how indignation does not have to be (and perhaps only in exceptional cases is) framed by political meta-narratives (cf. Snow & Benford, 1992). As for time appropriation, it is typically described in terms of a payback rationale. A telephone operator sums up the logic in these words: "This company steals money from us and what we do here is charity. So if they steal from us, we can steal from them." The stealing alluded to is not the capitalist exploitation in any universal sense, but the fact that the administration at her company frequently miscalculated how much she had worked, which

she experienced as a personal insult. But the most common source of indignation among the interviewees is to have a bad boss:

> Sven [the boss] did literally nothing. I told you about the emails. He just deleted them. He was also sacked for doing nothing. He was just rowdy and disgusting. At MSN, he could suddenly write 'cock'. And if you didn't reply, he just wrote: 'answer, cunt'. That's why I hated it, he was so disgusting. (Programmer)

Sexist, sadist, authoritarian and unintelligent bosses are recurring in many narratives. Other penultimate links provoking dissent include stupid colleagues:

> Those donkeys. Those who are mindlessly hard-working, and with low intelligence quotient if you know what I mean. Those who are just taking orders and happy to obey, almost ridiculously, vulgarly stupid. These people are given positions such as 'assistant desk manager', you know, just meaningless names, invented to make them feel even more important. (Salesclerk)

Unethical companies:

> We all hate the company. Once, Johan [the team leader] had brought this yellow kiwi, and he was so angry: 'they think they can play God', he went on. And he's pretty much the same when it comes to [the medical company where they work]. We all know who those on top are. They earn money on sickness, not on health. What they want is to remove the symptoms, that's it. (Laboratory assistant)

And homosocial cultures:

> I could see what was happening with the other women [at the advertising agency]. I mean, they had a very serious gender equality plan, there were no sexist jokes, no widespread sexism, but there was this negligence. Women had to struggle much harder. And then there was this 'us-bosses-between', this laddishness and all that. It was simply harder for women to get somewhere. And there were many young women who wanted to get there and who knew their stuff. Many had this 'good-girl-complex', but it just turned against them. They just worked, worked, and worked until they totally burned out. (Copywriter)

Unlike withdrawals, the motivational structure of direct dissent contains an urge for sabotage. Time appropriation can therefore constitute part of a "secret revenge," a form of sabotage that entails significant alleviations in the work intensity, and yet puts little at personal risk for the employee (cf. Morrill et al., 2003). The meaning here attached to the practice of time appropriation is ambiguous. In Fleming's words "it does not belong to the organization at all, but the initiative, creativity, and discretion of the workers themselves as they endeavor to be 'cool' in a decisively 'uncool' environment" (Fleming, 2009, p. 89). Yet, as Fleming develops his argument, the motivational vocabulary of this type also serves an ideological purpose in giving the employee a self-conceited sense of "I work here, but I'm cool" (cf. Liu, 2004, p. 299).

Since the sources of dissent are not put into narratives of oppressive universality, the vocabulary of direct dissent still expresses less resignation than any of the other vocabularies. Hope exists, and it is not beyond this world. The revenge can be taken here

and now, and if that is not enough the possibility of formal exit always exists. The telephone operator who eventually quit her job confirms her belief in the existence of a better world outside the workplace: "I would never like to return to that company again. The stupidity and abusiveness was just amazing." Making her old workplace a singularity in this way, it is considered an *exceptional* disgrace. As we shall see, this is a decisive difference from the vocabulary of framed dissent.

Framed dissent

In his extensive work on the history of workplace sabotage, Brown (1977) describes how the Glasgow dockers by the end of the 19th century were deprived of the force of strike as a consequence of mass-employment of so called blacklegs. The dock workers retorted by the practice of "ca'canny," "foot-dragging," "working to rule" and other classical forms of output restriction, arguing that they kept their efficiency at the level of the blacklegs. This activism turned out to be a successful tool of negotiation and the incidence would later have an immense impact on Pouget (1913 [1898]) and the French anarcho-syndicalist movement. Brown (1977) observes that ca'canny thus became political whereas "it was previously only practiced 'unconsciously' and instinctively by the workers" (p. 15).

This political dimension of time appropriation lingers on even if it has ceased to be part of the unionist arsenal. Not all time-appropriators would, however, formulate their actions in political terms. One thing that separates the vocabulary of direct dissent from that of framed dissent is precisely whether it is rooted in any "hidden transcript" to use Scott's vocabulary, i.e. in collective, critical narratives that circulate behind the backs of those in power (Scott, 1991, p. 4). The Soviet worker adage "they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work" exemplifies how hidden transcripts can provide ethical fundament for time appropriation while not being directed against any penultimate link in particular but the system as such. Time appropriation within such a narrative framework assumes a transcendent quality in the sense that its aim, however unrealistic it may be, is to produce structural change.
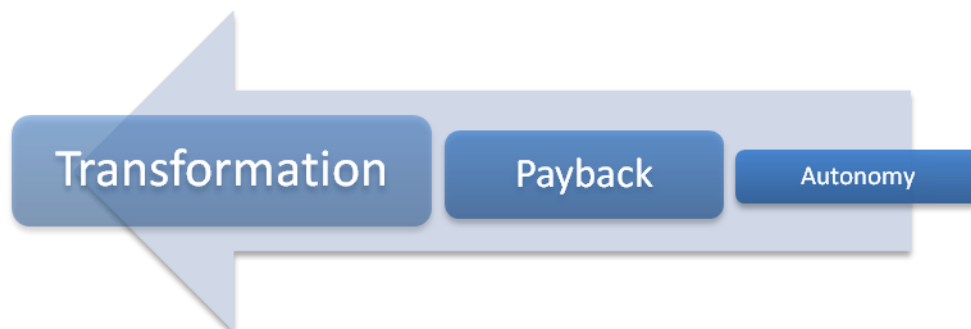

Figure 1. The accumulation of aims

As figure 1 illustrates there is still a cumulative aspect of time appropriation concerning the dimensions of aim, perceived enemy, negation and ethics. As for the aim of time appropriation, framed dissent does not exclude that the employee may enjoy the autonomy and personal payback that in other vocabularies reign supreme:

It's like killing two birds with one stone. You both avoid selling yourself entirely, and still get paid for watching movies. It's a kind of struggle that pays directly and therefore [time

appropriation] is in fact better than union matters and the like that lead nowhere. Here it's instant and therefore I think it's much more of a thorn in the side to capitalism. (Security officer)

To pick up the thread of unionism, another aspect of time appropriation that objectively might speak against its political value is the fact that it, like most oppositional workplace actions including sabotage, pilfering and identity struggles, cannot be completely overt unless it is general – which it rarely is. Individual employees are nearly always replaceable and no employee in this study has even mentioned Hirschman's "voice" as a useful option. An increasing part of the labor force is today experiencing *precariousness* (Bourdieu, 1998) and this kind of vulnerability is exactly what separates politics from what Scott (1991) calls *infrapolitics*: The latter has to be covert in order to exist at all.

Despite this fact, the dominating image of workplace resistance is that it should be formally organized and overt in order to not "qualify," whereas "misbehavior" represents more individual and spontaneous forms of oppositional practice (cf. Collinson & Ackroyd, 2005). Time appropriation in this study is with very few exceptions informal, yet the aspect of *peer collaboration* dramatically changes when the dissent is framed as here described. While time appropriation may be informal in the sense that it is not known to the employer or outside the organization, it may be more or less explicit among the employees. The vocabulary of framed dissent makes a point out of keeping the infrapolitics as explicit as possible among colleagues:

> What we do is simply to level some of the class inequalities. It doesn't matter if it's public or private, the injustice is the same. People from the lower classes usually understand that […] You should talk about it so that it becomes a normality. It's like gatecrashing [in the subway], I'm open about that too. If someone questions it, I take the discussion. Workplace struggle shouldn't simply be something you do. It's good to create a collective consciousness of that it's ok. It's the same thing with file-sharing. (Social worker)

The class identifying effect of time appropriation may in fact be experienced as more valuable than the damaging effect it might have on the profitability of the company. Although not formally organized, it may in fact turn into open opposition in some situations:

> Sometimes we are all caught in the act. Like one time, I think we were forty persons who just stood looking through the window. We barely have any windows on the floor so we never see anything. It was spring and everyone just stood there longing to get away. It was as if we were in a madhouse. We were locked up in there.
> Then the foreman came and lined up, he too. 'Well, I think it's time to make an effort now, let's roll up the sleeves. Cause this doesn't look too good, does it?' 'Oh, don't worry. Come here you," the others said. We didn't care a damn about him. Some slinked away obediently. Others didn't give a damn. (Factory worker)

As this episode indicates, a condition for explicitly rebellious time appropriation is that it involves the majority. Yet it should be noticed that the colleagues here could perfectly well be driven by direct dissent. Although the factory worker made reference to political narratives such as "global capitalism" and the "society of competition," his colleagues may have been staring out the window for different reasons, as he puts it himself, just

"longing to get away," to provoke the foreman, or maybe just to get a short break from work.

Concluding remarks

The notion of subject colonization is here refuted based on a typology of motivational vocabularies underlying the activity of time appropriation. Dissent, however outspoken it may be, does not have to be politically framed or tied to a "Grand Narrative" (cf. Lyotard, 1997). It diverges among individuals, both in strength and kind, even when resulting in the same type of resistance. Time appropriation can sometimes arise from adjustment to organized time waste. Also, time appropriation does not have to be targeted against any source of indignation other than the job itself as in the case of withdrawal. Furthermore, if it arises from indignation, this indignation does not have to be politically framed – the deprivation can be experienced as strictly personal, singular and consequently as even more of a disgrace than if put into meta-narratives where the seriality of injustice is recognized. If politically framed, time appropriation may be assigned the meaning of being a weapon in the struggle for transcendent change of societal structures.

Evidently, the practice of time appropriation has the same consequences regardless of what type of dissent it springs from. As already mentioned, recent studies emanating from the school of CMS, have questioned what Mumby (2005) describes as the "hollow victory" of celebrating "the ability of social actors to engage in parody, mimicry, and so on, while neglecting the extent to which the lives of organization members are becoming more oppressive, surveiled [...] and insecure" (p. 39). The argument has been summarized by Contu (2008) and her notion of a "decaf resistance" that neither entails any risk-taking on the part of the resisting employees, nor leads to any real change of the fundamental oppression. Analyzing the meaning attached to this kind of resistance, as has been done here, risks hiding the behavioral manifestations of consent that are dominating. As Thompson (2009) has noticed, the idea of organizations incorporating every form of resistance quickly led the swift celebration of Švejkian transgressions "back to zero" with post-structuralists "re-claiming the land of gloom."[8] According to these Žižek-inspired CMS scholars, it is not ideology in the form of "false consciousness" that is the issue; dissent may be very present, but this dissent has, according to the theory, *in itself* turned into ideology: "today, we only imagine that we do not 'really believe' in our ideology – in spite of this imaginary distance, we continue to practise it" (Zizek, 2009, p. 3).

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[8] In fact, this "neo-functionalism" (Sewell, 2008) is not particularly new as for workplace resistance. Even Littler and Salaman (1982) once asserted that "the first priority of capitalism is accumulation, not control" (p. 265). At that time, the argument was that big corporations in monopoly capitalism either buffered or externalized the costs of time waste and in that way managed to secretly offer small reliefs to the workers such as excitement and rest, thus avoiding more threatening forms of organized resistance (cf. Burawoy, 1979; Friedman, 1977; Lupton, 1963; L. Taylor & Walton, 1971). As many scholars argued, this sort of categorical analysis is fundamentally lacking of dialectics (Clawson & Fantasia, 1983; P. Edwards, 1986; Gartman, 1983; Roscigno & Hodson, 2004; Thompson, 1983). Illustrating the totalizing analysis that Certeau opposed, workplace resistance has either been glorified as subjective expressions of the immanent conflict of capitalism or been degraded to complex forms of consent.

In the context of this study, two problems in this critique must briefly be mentioned. First of all, it stands clear that none of these commentators have been able to concretize which standards they believe should be fulfilled when discerning a genuine act of resistance. The problem of defining resistance may be due to the fact that any objective criteria of "resistance" will be fundamentally political (in the sense that we are determining the limits of opposition and what it should be aimed at) and bound up with the old Sorites paradox (when is a heap a heap?).[9] But in light of the few suggestions that have so far been proposed by Žižekian scholars, a transcendental act of resistance that achieves changing whole structures of power excelling as an "act of terrifying and unadulterated freedom" (Contu, 2008, p. 376) would probably have to involve social revolution. Thus, in Contu's (2008) own words: "a Real act of resistance is an impossible act" (p. 374) – at least within the frames of capitalist society. My argument here is that until this impossible, inexplicable act of "unadulterated freedom" has mysteriously managed to free us from that society, everyday expressions of dissent might lead the way to a less intellectualist understanding of how to get there.

More importantly, the proponents of "the land of gloom" may definitely be right to the extent that apparent resistance is making employees consent to the overarching humiliation inherent in every form of employment – but this brings the discussion to a completely different level. From a functionalist perspective, *everything* happening in an organization can be said to contribute to the established order. However, during the early 1990s, functionalism was not as proliferating in CMS as it is today; what we saw then was rather the notion that managerial control was so effective that employees *wanted* to contribute and wholly invest themselves in their labor.

Many studies have proved the latter pessimism to be exaggerated – as Delbridge et al. (1992) succinctly put it, the very same "capitalist employment relationship" that resisting employees are unable to transcend, also "ensures that conflict is an enduring and endemic feature of the workplace" (p. 105). Surely we cannot subsume apparent "enunciatory acts" under one "Voice" as Certeau argued, but we can explore a dynamic ensemble of determinations including contradictions in the relationship between working demands, tasks and activities which generate the space and need for subjective intervention. In this context, managerial strategies, the (technically increased) paradox of control, the

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[9] A typical example has been provided by Karlsson (2008) whose definition of organizational resistance belongs to the more inclusive ones: "Resistance is everything that employees do, think and are that their superiors do not want them to do, think and be and that is consciously directed upwards in the organizational hierarchy" (p. 60). This definition will inevitably lead to questions concerning *how* conscious the actions and thoughts of the employee must be, and to what extent management should be opposed, in order to for them to qualify as resistance. Another example is offered by Collinson and Ackroyd (2005, p. 306) who distinguishes between acts of misbehavior and acts of resistance with reference to the respective degree of collective organization. Since the question of when the "collectiveness" of the action reaches the exact tipping point goes unmentioned and therefore remains unresolved, the use of this type of concepts are of little empirical value and more of the sensitizing sort. A way of circumventing this problematic is to focus on different sorts of "appropriation" (of time, work, product or identity) as have been suggested by Ackroyd and Thompson (1999, p. 25). But such a typology only addresses behavioral forms of resistance rather than its ideological depth and meaning. For a more theoretical typology of resistance that distinguishes between degrees of interpersonal recognition from "actor," "target" and "observer," see Hollander and Einwohner (2004, p. 544).

organizational possibilities and limitations of utilizing the appropriated time, the processual development of dissent and its transitions, should be subject to further study.

In *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills (1959) touched upon several issues concerning individuality and dissent and concluded with his famous notion of "the cheerful robot": "The values involved in the cultural problem of individuality are conveniently embodied in all that is suggested by the ideal of The Renaissance Man. The threat to that ideal is the ascendancy among us of The Cheerful Robot" (p. 174). Here, it has been argued that The Cheerful Robot probably is not as cheerful as Mills assumed. Even if the "morale in a modern American factory has to do with cheerful obedience on the part of the worker" (p. 93), normative disobedience remains an option. But dissent emanating from the conflict of capitalist employment can apparently be expressed in a variety of narratives. Although dissenting, the employee may not be able (or wanting) to reformulate "personal troubles" into "public issues" in a way that would realize sociology's "promise" according to Mills. Dissent can be experienced as a consequence of some shameful failure as in some cases of withdrawal, or just as an isolated phenomenon in one individual's life as in the case of direct dissent. Assuming that these forms of dissent represent the "death of the subject" will only drive CMS and other forms of critical sociology further from the public that supposedly is to be engaged. Learning to observe the differently articulated expressions of dissent may help to raise awareness, dissolve shameful feelings of personal failure, and encourage collective action.

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