Managing the Postcolony: an ethnography at the Bank Technology Centre

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Abstract

This thesis makes the case for *postcolony* in contemporary organization. To put it differently, this work seeks to tell the stories of legacies of Empire, colonial rule and the othering of experiences that did not conform to static images of the technology entrepreneur (white, masculinised, flexible) – at one organization. This research is based on an ethnographic study from 2014-2016 of a global Bank Technology Centre in the North of England (the 'BTC'). This thesis works with Achille Mbembe's concept of postcolony (2001), in order to help explain the ethnographic encounters at this fieldsite, including the drive towards 'appification' and de-materialisation of work at the BTC, and the metaphors of war and practices of violence that were normalised at this organization, in particular in relations between British staff working at the BTC and their counterparts in developing countries - or 'global hubs' - such as India and Lithuania. This bank's colonial history (as the 'Colonial Bank') is also examined in terms of the impacts on its modes of organising (Lury, 2004, 2013) today. A *temporal phenomenology of postcolony* is argued to exist at the BTC, as colonising modes of organizing time and material experience continue to dominate the working lives of staff at this site in post-colonial times. This thesis seeks to explore these themes via an attention to brands at the BTC (chapter 2), the work methodology of Agile at the BTC (chapter 3), and by exploring how language, spaces and the future of the organization were structured by practices of war and violence, salient features of the postcolony according to Mbembe (1992, 2001, 2017). This is a research project that endeavours to do ethnography 'against the grain', in the spirit of Harrison (1993), Stoler (2010) and Prasad (2015), with a concern for doing ethnographic research with an awareness of the historical dominance of Western-centric epistemologies and neo-colonial methods, which can still cause harm in organisations, including the academie, today (Todd, 2009, 2017). It was Walter Benjamin who first coined this term "against the grain", referring to the Marxist historical materialist belief that the horrors of the past do not possess the last word (to paraphrase Horkheimer), that there is a Messianic Redemption to the future that breaks history. For Benjamin, breaking with a homogenous past of suffering and believing in the future 'permits one to utter a confident No to the existent order' (1983, p.635). It is in such a spirit (if not with quite such commitment to historical materialism) that this work seeks to engage with postcolonial questions of organization, by specifically addressing the complete side-stepping of Achille Mbembe's work

in almost the entirety of business, management and organization scholarship. This thesis aims to begin a dialogue with a post-colonial organization studies community on Mbembe's significance as a 21st century thinker with transformational ideas for organizations today.

The Author

Felicity Heathcote-Márcz joined the MRes (Masters by Research) programme at AMBS in 2013 where she completed a pilot study for this PhD research. She subsequently carried out an ethnography of the global technology centre of one of the UK's largest banks from 2014-2016 for her AMBS PhD programme fieldwork. She is a published author and currently an ethnographer and Innovation lead at ATKINS/SNC-Lavalin.

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My greatest thanks go to the staff of the BTC; thank you for sharing your stories and your time with me. (I'll never forget being mistaken for and introduced to one team as a new divisional manager - also called Felicity - on my first day, and the confusion as to how this immature looking person got the job and why they would turn up in Dr Martens and a woolly jumper. Thankfully for all of us I turned out to be doing a PhD instead).

Thanks to all my former students, other long-suffering PhDs and inspiring academics who helped along the way.

My thanks must also go to the leadership team at Atkins IMST for their faith and support in the final phase of this work - it has made all the difference.

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None can reach dawn

without travelling the road of night.

Khalil Gibran

Introduction: Crashing into the field

I could hear my own scream, like I was looking at and hearing my body from the outside – as if the shaking that followed did not belong to my own hands around the steering wheel. I could see myself looking in the rear-view mirror at the driver behind, who had been propelled forward in his seat, and his BMW into my VW Beetle. He was shouting, turning back to look at the damage, I saw an anguished look on his face that scared me and made the shaking worse.

The crash happened early into my fieldwork for this project, a short drive from the rural security gates of my fieldsite – the Bank Technology Centre. It was the car behind me that was crushed, the driver behind him had not seen our cars queuing up like sitting ducks in a row on the sharp, winding bend ahead.

The driver in front of me had been hit too, and suddenly I realised his car was pulled over to the side of the road and he was beside my front seat passenger door, asking if I was alright. I was able to pull over too, get out of the car and realise I was still shaking, though less forcibly now. We both stared at the concertina-d, enormous body of the black BMW behind my car, afraid that the contents inside would mirror this violent compression. A man in a tightly buttoned up white shirt and long blue tie gets out of a Ford Escort behind the BMW. This driver, who caused the crash, looked sullen and was visibly shaking too, his dark skin pale as he peered into the passenger window of the BMW, then breathing a sigh of relief as the driver opened his door and slowly got out of what was left of his car, joining us on the side of the road and refusing help to walk. He was not visibly injured, but moved slowly and clutched at his shoulders and rubbed his chest. The four of us stood there together silently for what seemed like a long time, coming to terms with the damaged cars, bodies and psyches that the crash had inflicted.

The Ford Escort driver was first to speak: 'I…I just didn't see you past the bend…I'm sorry, this is my fault.' His Indian accent and the red lanyard and security tag I could see around his neck marked him out as a contractor who was working at the BTC on one of the 'build the bank' projects, which I had already learned often recruited software developers and testers from

India on short term contracts, usually those based in the city of Pune, from the bank's 'global hub' there, or from third party subsidiaries in the city. He became more anxious as we stood talking, and quickly lit up a Marlboro cigarette, which calmed him.

The driver who had been in the Fiat 500 in front of me was also a contractor from India, a much younger man whose bright red trainers and casual hooded top told me it was very likely he worked in the CoLab, a building at the BTC reserved for Agile working in 'sprints', and where Agile teams were almost entirely made up of Indian contractors. I realised this when he said that his car was not badly damaged and he needed to get to work, as his sprint was beginning this morning and he couldn't miss it. The rest of us took his details and he went on his way, leaving the crash scene.

As the BMW driver continued to rub his shoulders and arched his back into a stretch, he said a eulogy for his car 'She's a write-off. I was going to take a trip to the lakes this weekend too. Such a shame.' He opens the back-passenger door and retrieves from the car a crushed children's car seat. The object is grotesque and I can feel my arms beginning to shake again.

On seeing my reaction, the driver tries to make the situation lighter; he introduces himself and asks me if I work at the BTC too. I wave up my lanyard from my pocket, afraid my voice may give my continued state of shock away. This man was not an Indian contractor, his London accent and blue lanyard peeking out of his leather jacket pocket informed me of that. However, he was of Indian descent, as I realised when he tried to calm down the Marlboro-smoking driver who had caused the crash, who was getting increasingly upset, by asking where he was from in India, and elaborating on his parents' roots in Chennai and his wish to visit the bank's 'global hub' in Pune. The BMW driver was lively and quickly seemed to move on from any disturbance the crash had caused him (a potential coping mechanism I thought later), instead becoming interested in my green lanyard: 'Green?? What does that mean! Who are you?!' he asked teasingly.

What I was doing at the BTC and who I was to my interlocutors were pertinent questions to the early ethnographic interactions I was working through during these first few weeks and months at the BTC. I was a 'professional stranger' (Agar, 2008), a teller of 'hired-hand tales' (Roth, 1966) for my gatekeepers – who wanted an academic researcher to report on 'culture', and aesthetic change initiatives at the BTC that they were imposing (such as teams working

in Agile at the newly opened CoLab, as we will explore in chapter 3). My green lanyard was given to me by the receptionist at the BTC as a new category of visitor – one who was temporary but who *was* allowed to park in the site car park – a privilege usually only reserved for permanent members of staff (blue lanyards). Those contractors with red lanyards, such as our Marlboro smoking Ford Escort driver and the Fiat 500 driver eager to flee the site of the car crash, would both have to park off-site – which usually meant a precarious position on the side of this busy, rural A-road, or negotiating with a local farmer to park on his land for a fee (which many contractors did for £5 per day, preparing for a 15 minute walk to work through muddy ground when the weather was bad with pre-packed wellington boots one contractor from Turkey had told me). This politics of the car park was one of the first signs of what will be described in this thesis as a *postcolony in organization*, of the legacies of Empire and colonial encounters enacted in the control and regulation of the spaces of the BTC.

This project was attempting to do an ethnography that did not enforce these divides between those allowed in (in terms of our car park politics: overwhelmingly white British, permanent staff) and those kept out (overwhelmingly non-white, non-British contractors on precarious work contracts), an ethnography that did not act as a colonising force in organization. Instead the aim of this work became to challenge mainstream Western discourse of how banks and their work was portrayed and understood in organization studies, working 'against the grain' in the mode of Prasad's postcolonial research (2012), by thinking with the work of postcolonial and African Studies theorist Achille Mbembe and his conception of postcolony (1992, 2001). My aim was beginning - at the time of this crash - to take shape as exploring how groups of workers who were not white British and who were employed on short term, precarious work contracts at the BTC, were treated and why, along with those staff spoken to and about at the 'global hubs', or technology subsidiaries of this bank in India, Lithuania and other developing countries. I was starting to understand the bank as a historical institution, complicit in the maintenance of structures of the British Empire in territories such as South Africa and India (along with newer conquests such as the Philippines and Lithuania), where the bank had been trading for over 100 years and where a continued source of labour and consumer markets was enjoyed by the bank today. What emerged in this ethnography was a story that could not in fact be told without reference to colonialism; without looking back in order to understand the 'here and now' of ethnographic encounters at the BTC with a post-

colonial ethics, an attention to 'colonistic paradigms' (González, 2003), that sought to disrupt and, following in the project of Achille Mbembe and others in the post-colonial canon of scholarship, de-centre these.

This episode of the crash became symbolic and formative for this project, as the violence this ethnography was beginning to uncover and trace as ubiquitous to many practices of work at the BTC (particularly for minority groups and particularly in the discourse of war – see chapter 5), suddenly became embodied in my own shock, trauma and the scars that the crash inflicted on me: a worsening back injury as a result of this crash followed me in the months to come at the BTC, forcing me to sometimes find an empty room anywhere I could on site and lie on the floor for a few minutes, or leave the site, driving home early and trying to book emergency physio appointments as I did stretches in the on-site car park.

Ethnography had proven itself to me as a research method that was dangerous. A methodology that brought with it complicated and neo-colonial baggage that it was difficult to reconcile with my aim of doing ethnography 'against the grain' of Western models of knowledge construction (as will be discussed in detail in chapter 1). This was a method that meant I would have to continue to travel on that same 50mph, rural bend every day for many more months to spend time with my interlocutors; the crushed child car seat a haunting image I would be reminded of each time I made the journey. Ethnography was a practice of writing, listening, 'an attentiveness to life itself' (Narayan, 2012), that could not be compromised by claiming an objectivist interpretation or distance from the phenomena and people being studied, as other research methodologies from the positivist canon allow. There was a need to make sacrifices for my project in attempting ethnography - to put myself in the path of danger was 'probably inherent in anthropological fieldwork' (Sluka, 2012, p.283), particularly for an ethnographic project that was taking aim at the power structures and historical inequalities of this global bank that I was fortunate enough to have access to. The threat of legal action to come by one team leader in London following their access to one of my reports (meant for and requested from their boss) and objecting to anonymised characterisations was another methodological dangerous liaison that I was also lucky to escape unharmed.

I didn't have an easy answer to the question of who I was at that moment the BMW driver asked me following the car crash. The best I could come up with was 'I'm...from Manchester

University.' The crashing of one world into another, of the Western academie into the Bank Technology Centre in the rural North of England, was one that would leave its mark on me for far longer than this collision. This crash of cars and bodies at Stewart's 'space on the side of the road', where 'signs of suffered impacts remembered in places on the hills and on the body' (1996, p.205) crash together, was only my introduction to the field.

Figure 1: *Green Card: An image of my green security card – which allowed me to park at the BTC.*

Chapter 1

Postcolony: an ethnography against the grain

'The empire in a certain sense still existed, although it now clung on only in a twilit afterlife that carried an eerie echo of its original character.'

- **Kwasi Kwarteng, *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World***

The silence of Empire in organization

The epigraph above may seem an odd beginning to a project centred on a bank technology centre in the North of England; a sprawling site housing the latest innovations in banking technology and brand images, where the entrepreneurial spirit of technology start-ups that have become the behemoth corporations of the noughties (Google, Apple, Amazon, Alibaba, et al.) can be seen transforming the speed and content of financial products and services in the UK. The oddity – or out of place-ness to paraphrase Said (1999) - may in fact come from the complete exclusion of explicit discussion of Empire, colonialism and the legacies of imperial European rule over formerly colonised peoples and places, in almost the entirety of mainstream organisation, business and management studies, particularly in regard to empirical studies of financial services and institutions.

In the most highly rated academic journals for such debates – Journal of the Academy of Management, Organisation Science, Journal of Management to name but a few - there is a resounding silence on the legacies of Empire and colonial regimes for organisation past and present. Instead what scholars and global practitioners who read these journals find are polite, functionalist side-steps of race, inequality and colonial legacy in organisations. For instance, normative models of leadership to explain bias against black leaders in organisations (Carton and Rosette, 2012), and narratives from a human resource management perspective of increasing corporate 'diversity' in order to help boost efficiencies and productivity of firm performance (Peng and Luo, 2000; Richard, 2000; Jayne and Dipboye, 2004; Andrevski et al.,

2011), are quite common. Along with, occasionally, work that does address issues of colonial histories, only to reduce the complexities and critiques of these discussions to comparative tables of 'style of imperialism' and 'domestic conditions' (Peralias and Romero-Ávila, 2017). We may also point to the structural and functional orthodoxy of institutional theory in explaining entrepreneurial processes (Litzinger, 1963; David et al., 2013) which leaves no critical space for assessing the historical link between Western profiteering of former colonies, Anglo-European entrepreneurship in these spaces of colonial/former colonial Empire and 'the entrepreneurship of the dominated' (Georgiou, 2011). In terms of what we call 'mainstream literature' on banks in particular, abstractions of 'internationalisation' as a profit maximising and efficiency strategy are typical (Berger et al, 2016; Howcroft et al., 2010), with historical analyses omitting the political and human consequences of European and American banks entering markets in the non-Western world, along with the ties to Empire which often facilitated such entry. How banks with headquarters in Europe and America simulate foreign markets for competitive advantage is also discussed in these journals without reference to postcolonial scholarship or ethical critique (Detragiache et al., 2008; Gormley, 2010). Deployment of 'resources' (staff) for foreign banks operating in Asia are analysed through a neo-colonial prism of what is 'effective' or 'ineffective' for a bank, without discussion of the colonial legacy of banking practices in these countries (Natarajan et al., 2017). Finally, the improvement of 'corporate governance' is written about from a purely functionalist perspective in such journals, with more inclusivity of minorities, and other knowledge systems than Western models of financial capitalism, recommended for inclusion on banking boards purely for the sake of improved financial performance (Quttainah, 2017).

If mainstream scholarship on organisation, business and management is unable to speak of Empire and its aftermath, we find work that can be described as critical, particularly that falling into the loose category of Critical Management Studies (CMS), more open to studying organisations with Empire and colonial legacies in mind. It will be argued here however, that this engagement is only partial, and that gaps and silences in critical research projects when it comes to these themes are still a widespread, problematic feature of CMS.

Before an overview of research which engages these themes within CMS is sketched out, it would be sensible to communicate what CMS broadly is in terms of a school of thinking or research community, and explain why this is the most suitable home for this research project,

one which ethnographically explores the colonial legacies and challenges of and at a global bank technology centre.

CMS has a history and genesis in the Industrial Relations, neo-Marxist, Critical Theory, and Labour Process Theory debates of the 1970s and 1980s, (Stone, 1974; Benson, 1977; Burawoy, 1979; Dow, Clegg and Boreham, 1984; Clegg, Boreham and Dow, 1986; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Clegg, 1979, 1989; Ferguson, 1984) among others. The formalisation of the school and its discourses is widely argued to have taken place in the early 1990s with a series of essays published by Alvesson and Willmott (1992). However, this fixed idea of the genesis of CMS is contested by those in the field who argue that attempts to create such a formalised history are un-reflexive and exclusionary (Prasad, Prasad, Mills and Mills, 2015). Notwithstanding this, work under the broad label of CMS burgeoned through the late 1990s and 2000s, with scholars publishing from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives on topics from class struggle and power in the workplace (Jermier, 1998; Holliday and Hassard, 2001; Adler, 2007; Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007; Thompson, 2009, Thompson and Smith, 2010), gender and inequality at work (Acker, 2006; Sabelis et al., 2008; Knights and Surman, 2008; King and Learmonth, 2014), technical regimes of rationality within organisations (Alvesson, 1987, Adams and Ingersoll, 1990) and an analysis of the workplace from a postmodern, poststructuralist perspective (Alvesson and Deets, 2000; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001a; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001b, Hudon and Ruillard, 2015). Many other themes also populate CMS conferences (ICMS, EGOS, SCOS, LAEMOS, etc) and journals (Organisation, Organisation Studies, Culture and Organisation, Gender, Work & Organization, Ephemera, etc), but this thesis will focus on the argument that not enough engagement with postcolonial scholarship has been forthcoming from within CMS, (with critical spaces for organization research in the 'global South' rare also, one exception being LAEMOS), as well as a lack of attention to themes of Empire and colonial legacies when research studies are carried out by proponents of CMS.

Current debates: breaking the silence

In terms of CMS literature that does engage with broader postcolonial scholarship (Said, 1978, 1993, 1999; Fanon, 1952, 1959; Spivak, 1987, 1999, 2008, 2010; Spivak and Harasym, 1990;

Nandy, 1983; Nandy et al., 2004; Bhabha, 1994, 2013; Guha, 1997; Guha et al., 1997), we find attempts to map the interlinkages between modernity and coloniality (Faria, 2013; Zorn, 2005), and arguments on how it might be possible to de-colonialise international business knowledge via re-distribution mechanisms (Alcadipani and Faria, 2014). There are also on-going discussions on how Western knowledge systems reproduce colonial discourse and practices (Harding, 1996; Mir, Mir and Upadhyaya, 2003; Prasad, Prasad, Mills and Mills, 2015), an important exploration of the explicit genesis of modern management in slavery and imperialism in Bill Cooke's project (2003a, 2003b, 2004), and critical readings of markets as dispossessors and enactors of violence on vulnerable groups in the global South (Banerjee, 2018). As Brewis and Wray-Bliss have argued in their 2003 paper 'Re-searching ethics: Towards a more Reflexive Critical Management Studies', there are silences within the canon of CMS due to its institutionalisation and history of class-dominated critique, silences that include failing to challenge the Western (and severely male-dominated) canon of philosophy and critical theory that underpins much classical CMS work, and which negates post-colonial histories and the legacies that organisations of Empire have left behind. The distinct radicalness of postcolonialism as a mode of analysis can be argued to stem from its rejection of Marxist historical analysis that is based on Enlightenment epistemologies, Eurocentric conceptions of rationality (where Europe is the 'centre and end' of history (Fotaki and Prasad, 2015)), and even an apologist discourse for European colonialism (Prakesh, 1990, 1992; Prasad and Prasad, 2003). This departure from Marxist critique may also explain postcolonialism's negation by CMS from the outset, considering its history in Labour Process Theory. Prasad has called for postcolonialism to be used as a tool to ensure modes of analysis such as Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism, when utilised in organization studies, are not 'fatally enmeshed' by Eurocentric categories and knowledge production (2012). Prasad, Prasad, Mills and Mills (2015) have called CMS a 'branded segment of critique' – branded in terms of maintaining geographic, conceptual and institutional boundaries that have become the norm of the community. They particularly single out the 'Manchester School' of scholars within CMS for critique, those who have engaged predominantly with questions of subjectivity and identity in the workplace (2015) via neo-Marxist and poststructuralist concepts. They argue that such work excludes a reflexive account of the privilege of Western, masculine discourses and their effects on peoples who have been colonised since the beginnings of the project of European States' Empire building in the 15th

century. Cunliffe has also made similar interventions, commenting on the 'male and Eurocentric image' of CMS that many of its practitioners want to move on from (2008, p.937). This thesis also makes the case that the CMS status quo has failed to adequately address and challenge issues such as the homogenisation of Western knowledge production as well as colonised social and institutional regimes of legitimacy, and Grimes *et al*. have offered an even sharper critique in their stream for the 6th International Critical Management Studies Conference, 2009, entitled '*Feminism and Critical Race Theory? That's chapter 12. Doing Critical Management Studies as if Feminism and Critical Race Theory really mattered*'. They call out CMS for placing feminist and critical race theorists 'literally on the margins' both in terms of engagement in academic texts and when such themes are presented in the flesh at CMS conferences. Brewis and Wray-Bliss have called for a re-imagined, more self-aware CMS that is able to embrace a new, more inclusive research ethics and reach its emancipatory potential for transforming organisations (2008). Prasad, Prasad, Mills and Mills also call for CMS to embrace what Mignolo has termed a new 'polycentric world order' (2011), where knowledge is valorised and supported from sources apart from neo-colonial ones (Western institutions, structures of power, legitimacy and histories) (2015).

In spite of this imperfect track record when it comes to work that seriously engages with postcolonial epistemologies, methodologies and subjectivities, the work which has been done and the struggles which are currently going on within the broad church of CMS to make the community and its preoccupations more inclusive and ethnical, provide a good starting point for this project's ambitions. Wanderley and Barros' recent work on decolonising development studies poses a radical challenge to neo-liberal structures of organising (2018), and Prasad and Banerjee (2008) have called for a more ambitious and comprehensive critique of postcolonialism from within studies of post-development and organisation, in order to challenge contemporary neo-colonial practices, such as the global dominance of English as the language of business for example. This is to not only challenge its ubiquity but to de-construct neo-colonial discourse that has become a set of global norms, which continue to orient the non-West as ontologically inferior and requiring the help of Western management practice in order to become modern and organised (Ibid). Such saviour complexes in Western academia are hardly new, as Banerjee, Mir and Mir (2008) have also hinted at in their discussion of the legacies of Empire within organizations and for those who work in them,

asserting that workplace relations can reflect 'relations of imperialism and cultural dislocation' (p.5). Of particular interest in terms of an intellectual project, Prasad (2015) has discussed how postcolonial approaches to management and organization can not only engage in breaking the silence on critique of Euro/Western centric discourse in mainstream (and CMS) approaches, but how postcolonial thinking also opens up the possibility of doing research 'against the grain' of traditional approaches, by 'exerting constant pressure on, and reorienting, the logics and the trajectories generally followed…generating uniquely original insights' (2015, p.20). How this project seeks to contribute to such debates is via extending these discussions to the specificities of organisational life within the UK banking industry, and the globalised networks (of labour and technology) of one global, UK based bank with several 'global hubs' (or subsidiaries) and technology centres in the non-Western world. By attending to the ethnographic realities of the spaces, time and experiences of staff at one bank technology centre in the North of England over a 2 year period (2014-2016), the 'strategic global hub' where senior managers for global teams were all based, this thesis aims to draw attention to the legacies of Empire and the 'colony' at the bank. These include legacies of war, brand, and work regimes that perpetuate inequality and colonial power structures between the bank's UK employees and those in other global locations, from the ethnographic perspective of a single sited long-term study. The reason for this project's intervention into themes of Empire and legacies of colonialism for organisations today, is, firstly, the gap in the literature on such research themes from mainstream business, management and organization research (as we have seen above). Just as important is the problematic nature of masculinised and Eurocentric discourse on organizations in CMS, which leaves a significant and worrying gap in knowledge and understanding for how organizations have not only been constructed by Empire, but continue to be, and in turn construct the lives of people who come into contact with them via these colonial legacies. For practitioners in the banking industry, and those who read mainstream business and management journals, the legacies of Empire should be a mainstream occupation. This is argued because as managing complex technical systems such as banking apps (see chapters 2 and 3) becomes an essential part of mainstream organization today, so the marks of colonial power structures on how these are designed, who builds and manages these and how these complex networks of global labour are treated, has a profound effect on what organizations such as banks and technical systems such as apps really are. Are these to be manifestations of a new Empire, one that replaces the colony and the slave trade

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with the 'human-in-flux' (Mbembe, 2017), the neoliberal Empire of Silicon Valley simulacras creating 'new imperial practices' of race and racism? (Mbembe, 2017, p.4). As Cooke has posited, colonialism as a historical phenomenon and the 'conditions of possibility it legitimates today' should matter deeply to scholars of organization (Bernard et al., 2014). Being reflexive of González' caution that 'the nature of knowledge becomes a mirror set by the boundaries of the colonising agents' (2003, p.80), we should - nay we must! - consider the colonising forces CMS has been guilty of perpetuating – whether in epistemological hierarchies of work published from the discipline (the dearth of articles and conference streams engaging with post-colonial scholars such as Mbembe and the proliferation of work on Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Latour and other notable white European philosophers and theorists speaks for itself (along with the lack of work centred on feminist or female theorists, as Grimes *et al.* have made clear above)). There is also the inattention being paid to de-colonising methodologies of research including reflexive research ethics (Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008). Cooke has also made the fundamental point that 'empire is absent from CMS' (2003c, p.90), and this absence, this deafening silence is, it is argued here, a failure on the part of critical scholars and practitioners to challenge colonial regimes of work that continue to prosper in contemporary organisations. These instead remain hidden, ignored and ubiquitously powerful when post-colonial and de-colonial approaches do not feature as central, or important enough to warrant space in business, management and organization journals, textbooks, conferences, and from an action-research perspective, such as in academic consultancy to industry practitioners.

Postcolony: time against the grain

One key scholar of postcolonial and African studies that this thesis will attempt to engage as a central part of its arguments, is Achille Mbembe – and in particular Mbembe's concept of *postcolony* (1992, 2001). Chapter 4 will see a detailed and explicit reading of Mbembe's concept, the seminal contribution of his corpus of work to postcolonial scholarship, and a discussion of what business, management and organization can gain from engaging seriously with his work. However, the point to make at this juncture is that his work has been almost entirely ignored by debates in organisation, business and management, including CMS. The single reference point to Mbembe, and where his work has usefully been incorporated into

analyses of organizations, is Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee's paper 'Necrocapitalism' (2008), which explicates Mbembe's theory of necropolitics (2003), to describe organizational practices of capital accumulation - those which result in dispossession and death for peoples subjected to the power and oppression of Necrocapitalist realities. The side-stepping of Mbembe's contribution to postcolonial thinking for almost all of CMS scholarship would serve to reiterate critiques that CMS is a gendered and racialized mode of enunciation (Ahmed, 1998, p.14), that requires reform via scholars working with post-colonial and de-colonial methods and concepts.

Jack and Westwood (2007, 2009) in their work have argued that postcolonial methodologies have not been adopted readily by the CMS community as they are not seen as relevant to most 'metropolitan' research – whether that be in relation to city spaces and/or the etymological meaning of metropolitan as the parent state of a colony (Oxford English Dictionary online definition). From an attention to the ethnographic detail of one global bank technology centre, this thesis attempts to begin to address this lack within CMS. It will make the case that contemporary organization is fundamentally shaped by a Western-centric approach to time, space and experience rooted in colonial preoccupations, perpetually fuelling intensification and precarity at work, along with empty visions of the future. This work aims to contribute specifically to studies of time, phenomenology and materiality in organization and management literatures, from a critical, postcolonial perspective. A time and space this thesis will call *postcolony* – inspired by Achille Mbembe's concept (1992, 2001) is found to structure the work of staff at the UK strategic technology centre of a global bank, and my own experience as an ethnographer attempting to understand their worlds from 2014-2016. This project will attempt to explore what an ethnography 'against the grain', in Prasad's terms (2015), at this global bank technology centre in the UK, could mean and look like.

Western discourses of management and organisation are those Prasad has defined as 'interdependent and mutually reinforcing networks…deeply complicit with the discourse of Western colonialism' (2012, p.21), and this project finds a gap in current research in postcolonial scholarship on organization that considers the temporal and phenomenological experience of work in organizations that are colonial in their history as well as current practices and culture (to follow the thinking of Cooke's work on imperialist management,

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including within methods such as ethnography (2003)). This will therefore become the foci for this project's engagement with postcolonial themes that attempt to create an ethnography against the grain of mainstream, normative research into banks and financial institutions.

Mbembe has argued that a myth of unitary temporal discourse characterises what he calls the postcolony (2001), and it is this characterisation of time – as the homogenous myth of colonial perspectivism - that makes the idea, the concept of postcolony, so relevant for this project. Temporality and time have been debated in organization studies from many perspectives, including the resistive technique of imagining future selves as a response to disciplinary power in organizations (Costas and Grey, 2014), how alternative perceptions of time can open possibilities for organizational research (Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje, 2004), and the ways temporality also structures how non-human beings such as objects are organized (Gasparin and Neyland, 2017). Ybema (2010) has called for a more systematic focus on temporal issues of organization, and political economy scholars such as Nigel Thrift have argued organization studies should utilise the notion of time and materiality in Gabriel Tarde's work in order to create research that is able to understand life in 'motion' that is connected to the corporeal body (Czarniawska, 2009). The ways in which leaders of organization conceive of the future has been argued by Johansen and de Cock (2017) to be ideologically driven, giving an ideological structure to time in organizations. This thesis will attempt to add to this ideological and political understanding of temporality and visions of the future in organizations, from a post-colonial perspective (following the postcolony that emerged from this fieldwork), and utilising critical, postcolonial ethnography as the methodological approach. In trying to make sense of the times and spaces that were experienced at the fieldsite, these came to be understood as representations of futures the bank's leaders were selling to themselves, their teams and their customers. The disjunctures between such visions of the future communicated by managers, by marketing materials, and by the brands of the bank, and the lived realities of regimes of work happening at the Bank Technology Centre (BTC) through 2014-2016, was the basis of this ethnography developing a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony* to tell these ethnographic stories.

By understanding time at the BTC as structured by the 'myth' of the postcolony, 'a regime of unreality' (Mbembe, 2001, p.108), with managers/leaders (and those staff under their

control) attempting to create new futures for the bank via their work which presents a dissonance to the former, we can begin to translate what happens in the day to day activities of the BTC as structured in time by specific kinds of politics and embodied knowledge. For example, we will see in chapter 3 how the work regime of "Agile" is creating a time of fast iteration, precarity and excess at the BTC, whereas in chapter 5 we explore how metaphors of war used by staff working at the BTC represent an intensification of work that makes the BTC feel like a battlefield, a world under constant threat of annihilation, and how these metaphors signify a dominant and ubiquitous colonising regime of hyper-masculine, hyper-capitalist and neo-colonial work. These can be traced historically to the bank's colonial roots (as will be discussed in chapter 2). In chapter 2 we uncover the various brands of the bank, both internal and external marketing images and messages, and these are described as representations of the ideological future of time Johansen and de Cock have discussed in their work (2017). The future at the BTC being a desire to de-materialise into the smartphone app, and vanishing the bank and those bodies which make it up, from UK high streets to the redundancy of teams in the UK and the opening of low-cost technology centres in the global South. The embodied realities of creating, supporting and selling the BTC's products and services, such as 'mini-apps' will also be discussed here in relation to Empire and its aftermath.

Attempting a critical, postcolonial ethnography

In terms of methodology, the ethnographic approach poses some interesting opportunities and challenges for a project which enunciates postcolonial sensibilities and attempts to work *against the grain* of Euro and Western-centric structures of knowledge production and power. The reason for this is firstly the genesis and history of anthropology, the mother of ethnography, as a set of research methods, which is well known as an early 'colonial writing of culture' (Gonázlez, 2003, p.78). European missionaries and writers sent by State authorities from Europe to interpret foreign and exoticised worlds, in order that these might be organised better (Pels, 1997, 2008) were the forefathers and early developers of ethnographic fieldwork and the ethnographic monograph. Early ethnographies were therefore a means of conquest of the other, a way to 'justify, legitimise and perpetuate the colonisation of those about whom the texts were written' (González, Ibid). From this uncomfortable birthplace, ethnography as

a discipline has evolved into an often hyper-self-aware and reflexive set of practices and epistemological preoccupations, with this turn from the 1970s-1990s seeing a wave of backlash and critique of anthropology and ethnography's colonial roots becoming a mainstream part of the discourse of debates within this field (Lewis, 1973; Asad, 1973; Singer, 2006; Huzzier, 1979; Taussig, 1987; Scheper-Hughes, 1995; Stocking, 1991; Pels, 1997; Huggan, 1997). More current critiques of anthropology continue to call out the Western and Eurocentric dominance of scholarship in the field, and the institutionalised marginalisation of non-white and indigenous voices in the academy, where 'racism and whiteness are reinforced and reproduced' (Todd, 2015, 2017; Ahmed, 2014). Ethnographies which attempt to radically reject Euro and Western centrism and the oppressions of othered research subjects (instead transforming how those are positioned into interlocutors, equal ontologically to the ethnographer (Said, 1989; Riles, 2011; Friedman, 2012)), are engaging in post-colonial and de-colonial ethnographic projects, such as Emma Pérez' 'Decolonial imaginary' (1999), which calls a de-colonial voice one which approaches research problems as a means to 'undo the constructions of colonising ontologies and epistemologies' (p.80). De-colonial ethnographies aim to 'illuminate and deconstruct colonial dominance' according to James (2016, p.4), and Uperesa has written of how work which takes a de-colonial approach to anthropology seriously is that which utilises de-colonial methods as a framework for all research, and which challenges the 'maintenance of ethnographic authority' (2016), historically involving the white, male, European academic as the knower, with peoples from the Global South as the receivers of knowledge, those to be studied, and known. However, for this research project to be described as de-colonial (particularly on Pérez' terms (1999)), raises a problematic and instinctual discomfort from this writer – that is, the positionality of my own privilege as a white, middle class woman at the BTC, where I would often be treated as a figure identified with management and managerial status as I spent time with various technology teams, notebook in hand, scribing furiously as much of what was said around and to me as possible. My pen would often be interpreted as a tool of managerial control rather than de-colonial activism for those I encountered in the field: 'Are you here to monitor us?' (Ethnographer's fieldnotes, 6 October, 2015). González has written of her struggle to 'find a voice that would not reproduce the colonialist view' (2003, p.79), as a woman of Mexican heritage writing up her ethnography with 'native elders and teachers' in Mexico, and the struggle to speak with de-colonial integrity is arguably more pronounced for a Caucasian attempting to engage post

and de-colonial concepts in ethnographic practice when 'whiteness is a lightening of a load' (Ahmed, 2014), particularly when studying in a white context and institution. When considering this methodological problem, I am reminded of Benton's 'paradox of emancipation', where good intentions of an observer (or researcher) matter little, as our texts remain 'other ascription of interests, not self-ascription' (1981, p.167). This phenomenological removal from the experience of research interlocutors who were most subject to negative treatment from regimes of work that were legacies of colonial Empire at the BTC (overwhelmingly those from the global South), means that the voice and body of this writer is of ethnographic concern, and must be openly acknowledged and confronted, in terms of which knowledges and experiences will be translated and how in this ethnography. As David Knights, one of the first proponents of CMS, has argued: we should produce texts which emphasise our own partiality as researchers (2006), and this thesis will attempt to take this seriously and follow González in her call to tell the 'story of our stories' as researchers, including our histories and our privilege and our limitations, in order to be accountable while undertaking ethnographic work. Altheide and Johnson have described an 'accountability trail' as an ethical pathway to trace motivations and interactions through our research projects and our own histories as researchers (1994). As González also points out, a post-colonial ethnography should follow an ethics of tracing more than the colonial relations that have taken place, but should show how colonialist realities and structures have lost at least some of their control, to detail the rebellion and courageous challenge that is taking place to resist the colonial 'after the colonial' (2003, p.81). This project will attempt to do just that by recounting the ethnographic moments of challenge to legacies of colonial Empire at the BTC (see in particular chapter 3 'Darrell's Agile').

Banerjee and Linstead have argued that many anthropological accounts, such as Whiteman and Cooper's indigenous management work (2000), remain unreflexively embedded in their own neo-colonialism (2001), and in terms of creating an ethical post-colonial ethnography, avoiding this is a key prerequisite. Epistemic violence can be a facet of the interaction between coloniser and colonised (Harding, 1996), and when the distinctions between such subjectivities and identities are less clear cut, such as the relationship between ethnographer and those encountered 'in the field', researchers who attempt projects that challenge colonial legacies and regimes of power in organizations need to place ethics at the centre of their

work. In terms of what a post-colonial ethics could be for ethnography, we can again turn to González, as she describes the 'radical openness to see not only what is in one's social and environmental context…to see that which is, on the surface, not visible' (2012, p.84). For example, by engaging in critique of organizational ideologies and practices that may on the surface seem innovative and allowing for radical agency of a global workforce, but which are, when studied more closely, legacies of oppressive systems of management from colonial relationships (we will discuss these themes in chapter 3 with an attention to the work methodology of Agile). The researcher must look beyond the comfort zone of the spaces and identities they have been allocated when entering ethnographic fieldwork at an organisation – in this case an assumed position of white middle management – and use ethnographic methods to de-familiarize taken-for-granted circumstances, revealing suppressed and alternative possibilities (Linstead, 2002). Following from the trend of work in CMS and studies of organization and management that tries to meaningfully engage with anthropological tradition (such as Linstead), this project seeks to do postcolonial, critical ethnography, while holding the colonial histories and dispositions of ethnographic work to account. As 'the imposition of colonial authority…draws attention to the creativity of human relations through its attempted management' (James, 2016, p.4), so scholars of management and organization must navigate the attentions of their disciplines to the potentialities of post and de-colonial approaches, which can provide a rich toolkit of methodologies and epistemologies from which critical research, including ethnography, may flourish. The ways in which this project will focus on phenomenological aspects of ethnographic experience in order for a knowledge that is post-colonial and critical to be fully realised will be outlined briefly next.

The embodied postcolony

Let us first assess the field of material, embodied and phenomenological approaches in studies of organization, business and management, which are being treated here as broadly aligned, as analytical lenses all concerned with an attention to cognitive and corporeal experience. The turn to materiality in studies of organization has seen a burgeoning of post-structuralist feminist literature on the topic (Calás and Smircich, 1999; Ashcraft, 2000; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Pullen, 2006; Gatrell, 2011; Philips, Pullen and Rhodes, 2014(a)

and 2014(b); Vachhani, 2009, 2012; Fotaki et al., 2014; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015; Fotaki, Kenny and Vachhini, 2017). However, there is a lack of work concerned with materiality in organizations from the point of view of colonization and its aftermath: of bodies at work and the phenomenological experience of work after Empire. Prasad has pioneered research in post-colonial organization studies which argues for a post-colonial subjectivity shaped by colonial legacies for non-white, non-Western workers in post-colonial contexts (2017). In Prasad's analysis of race and racism in the investment banking industry in Hong Kong, elite industries in former colonised nations are shown to reproduce racisms of a colonial past, as is shown via the descriptive narratives of 'a racialized individual' working as an investment banker. By extending Prasad's call for more work that studies the contexts of post-colonial subjects and their experiences in 'elite contexts' and industries such as banking, this thesis seeks to utilise ethnography in order to gain access to the phenomenological, material and temporal relations and reactions to post-colonial organizing at the BTC. There has yet to be an exploration of the embodied implications of the legacies of Empire in the context of Western elite organizations, specifically the global banking industry. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the current literature, utilising Achille Mbembe's concept of *postcolony*.

Work concerning materiality in organization studies has in recent years seen embodiment as central to understanding organizations and undertaking organizational research (Carlile et al. 2013; Jones, 2013; Dale, 2001; Dale and Latham, 2015). In terms of ethnography, the embodied experience has been written about by Strati (1999), who argues that empathy can be developed via imagining the experience of the other from the embodied positionality of ethnographer: 'we become valid sources of data in ourselves via our own aesthetic experiences'. Likewise, Stoller (1997) has also argued that embodiment is the very opening up of the ethnographer to the experience of the other: 'ethnographers open themselves to others and absorb their worlds. Such is the meaning of embodiment. For ethnographers embodiment is … the realization that … we too are consumed by the sensual world, that ethnographic things capture us through our bodies' (p. 23). Embodiment can be seen then, as central to the process of fieldwork (Prasad, 2014). In explicating how embodied experiences are those structured by the time and context in which they occur, Prasad cites the work of Csordas (1990) as fundamental to learning to do fieldwork with the body; 'the body is not an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered the *subject* of culture' (p.5,

emphasis in original). The body of the researcher, especially one practicing ethnography, and the bodies of those she engages with as participants in that research, are in the embodied paradigm of knowledge-making released from any essentialist and colonialist Cartesian dualism between mind and body, and can at once begin to inhabit the goings on of the field with one another in ways that go beyond a specific occurrence or point in time. Rather, wider 'analyses of culture and history' can begin to take place together (Prasad, 2014, p.529). For this project, it is the time of postcolony at the BTC – experienced via the disjunctures between what was going on in the here and now at the BTC visions of a de-materialised future sold by the bank's senior leaders, and the bank's colonial past experienced via ethnographic stories of former glories and difficult relationships between UK teams and those in post-colonial contexts such as South Africa and India - that structured what this ethnographic analysis would become. This project has attempted to open up its ethnography to Stoller's 'experience of the other' (1997), when otherness is implicit in the way space, time and ideologies of work are structured in organization. If we link back to post-colonial scholarship, González has called for embodiment to be taken seriously when creating meaning in post and de-colonial ethnography, as 'not only the mind has been colonised' (2003, p.83). This project will aim to link post-colonial analysis, phenomenological experience, and time in a tripartite of concepts for contribution to debates within CMS and studies of business, management and organization more broadly.

Tripartite contribution

Fotaki has called on those who are interested in studying the materiality of organizations to accept the 'necessity of understanding gender, discourse and materiality as mutually constitutive' (2014, p.1240), and this thesis will argue that colonization, time and materiality are also mutually creative and interdependent for those working in organizations. As has been mentioned previously, there has been a serious lack of attention to Mbembe's work in management and organization scholarship (with Banerjee, 2008, being a rare exception), which this thesis aims to begin to redress, and the reason this is important is twofold: firstly it will be argued that Mbembe's concept of postcolony is one which speaks to many live debates taking place within post-colonial Organization Studies, embodied research methods

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in OS, and OS scholars concerned with temporality (as are referenced in this chapter), offering a bridge between these often distant disciplines of OS speaking to different problems. By thinking with concepts that have emerged outside Western-centric discourse and history, it is also argued here that scholars interested in understanding organization ethnographically, can think through ethnographic moments in ways which work against the grain (Prasad, 2015).

Postcolony is a concept which has allowed me to think through ethnographic moments of this fieldwork at the BTC; offering a vocabulary for what I was attempting to enunciate when non-white, non-British occupants of certain spaces at the BTC were found to be negotiating and being subjected to a spatio-temporal metaphysic that brought the bank's colonial past, mythic future of progress via technology, and the disjunctures of the lived experience in the here and now all into sharp contrast and ethnographic vision. A critical construction of the field as postcolony was therefore facilitated by attempting ethnography 'against the grain', taking inspiration from Mbembe's work in African Studies and postcolonial theory to help understand organization at the BTC. What emerged from the field also spoke to academic problems identified above such as the silence of Empire and colonial histories in CMS and more mainstream organization, business and management studies. Understanding what was taking place at the BTC as excessive of an analysis of objects of social scientific inquiry (following O'Doherty, 2017), but rather, a critical emergence of the field itself as postcolony, helped to make sense of phenomena at the BTC and to translate this into academic textuality. This argument is acknowledged to be a complex one, requiring each step to be carefully traced out via ethnographic accounts and explanation of events, and this shall be attempted in each of the following chapters.

Contributions to knowledge and specifically to those in dialogue with Mbembe's work will be discussed in chapter 4, however it is important to note that the concept of 'postcolony' and its implications for organization has not been engaged with to date. It will be argued here that Mbembe's postcolony can make a contribution to debates concerning time and phenomenological experience in organization, by helping us to think through the colonising regimes or organizing found at the BTC from 2014-2016, and the de-racialising that took place in its spaces (such as the CoLab, as we will discuss in chapter 3). This thesis aims to make these

links between the post-coloniality of a global bank in the 21ˢᵗ century and Mbembe's conceptual framework explicit, whilst telling an ethnographic story of the Bank Technology Centre.

Practicalities: what did you do?

Before getting any further carried away with debates on academic contribution, this section will detail the practicalities of this project: methodological clarifications and particulars, challenges with and duration of access, the politics of gatekeeping and other practical elementsof this ethnography will be detailed below.

This project is a long-term ethnographic study of the 'global Bank Technology Centre' (or 'BTC' as the site was abbreviated to by those who worked there) of one of the UK's biggest retail and corporate banks, which has a presence in many retail and investment banking markets around the world. The fieldsite is situated in the North of England in a rural location. From an initial 'pilot' study in 2014, access was extended throughout 2015 until the final fieldsite visits in 2016. The decision was made to focus this work on a single-sited ethnography as questions and negotiations of access to different sites were attempted but found to be complex and time consuming (access to the BTC alone took almost one year overall), therefore it was important to gather as much data as possible at the site where access had been granted and relationships forged. Secondly, this one site housed a rich variety of technology teams and functions, spread over six large office buildings (and one manor house built in 1917 prior to the bank taking over the site in the 1950s), all occupying several acres of rural land which had been built on over the last 50 years to house the entirety of this bank's 'strategic' technology teams and products. There were therefore plentiful sources of rich research data where 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) could emerge and be explored at this single site – the BTC, which also acted as the 'strategic centre' for the global technology functions of the bank, where all technology and managerial roles deemed high profile and requiring a high level of technical expertise, were based. Functions such as the bank's internal and external (public facing) call centres, software development and data management had been offshored to 'global hubs' such as India, Lithuania and the Philippines by the time I began fieldwork, with one such team

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being made redundant and their jobs offshored in between my first weeks at the site in 2014 and my return in 2015.

i.   Access

The opportunity for access came about due to a networking seminar in 2014 for aspiring ethnographers, keen to offer help and support for one another. From initial introductions via an attendee of this seminar and her husband who worked at the BTC - and, luckily, a proponent of the benefits ethnographic research could bring to organizations - I was able to find two sponsors and 'gatekeepers' for this project at the BTC, who are named here via the pseudonyms 'Angela' and 'Rupert'. I was invited to the BTC for an initial meeting with these two, both senior managers at the BTC, Angela of 'Risk' and Rupert of 'Service and Change'. Rupert was also the Co-Chair of a network for self-identifying LGBT employees at the BTC. His motivations for lobbying the senior leadership committee at the BTC to allow me access for such a long period, was to enable a 'free' research study of different technology teams for the bank. The chance to gain an extended period of what amounted to consultancy, in exchange only for access and the understanding I would be writing any findings up (giving all participants of the research anonymity) for academic projects, was an attractive proposition. The role Rupert envisioned for me and the work I would do at the BTC was to support his agenda of 'culture change' at the BTC and the bank more widely. What was understood by this was that Rupert saw the project as a chance to get to know 'what was really going on' within the hidden worlds of particular technology teams he admitted he was far removed from and did not understand, but saw as having 'problems', or requiring help to show them 'the right direction' for culture and behavioural change in an era of 'transformation' and 'Agile work' for the bank's technology divisions. Although Angela was more senior and would have the final steer on this research, Rupert appeared ambitious from our first encounters, and over the two years of this ethnography Rupert's role did shapeshift and he became more involved with senior leadership visits and initiatives, a role it was clear he took great pride in from the way he spoke to me about his influence with senior leaders at the bank: 'I went to dinner with (the CTO)…had his ear all night'.

Angela was eager for me to start this project in order to help her translate the 'risk management behaviours' that were happening on the ground of the two different parts of the bank – 'build' and 'run' (the BTC teams were split into those which built new technology services, such as new apps ('build'), and those which maintained/supported or decommissioned old technologies ('run')). Angela was interested in the potential of ethnography to tell the stories of each of the technology teams, because Angela saw these as working in 'their own little fiefdoms', and disconnected from the big goal of the bank – which was to keep customer data safe, respond punctually to audit requests, and follow the dictates of the site management committee, she told me.

The BTC management committee were an important group of stakeholders, however, they had little connection to this ethnography apart from that mediated by Rupert and Angela, who were both members, and aside also from the few committee meetings I was able to attend and report my findings to during the course of this research, which were received with interest but little follow up or genuine concern. The committee made decisions on aspects of site management at the BTC such as who was allowed to park in the site car park, and where the 'smokers corner' would be moved to – a recurring debate during my time at the BTC as this was currently too much of an eyesore directly outside one of the largest buildings called 'The Tower' (more on this building in chapter 5), and causing litter to be left below trees – as was discussed in one committee meeting. Such decisions seemed to me at first a function of bureaucratic management and without much consequence or power. However, over time it became clear how political the BTC car park access was, particularly as a policy which formalised certain inequalities among BTC workers, which, as we shall discuss later, had significant colonial legacies attached to them. The site committee's drive to prioritise aesthetic 'makeovers' (a formula for 'culture shift') for some buildings and technology teams over others, and its commitment to supporting the shift to 'Agile' working, could in fact all be interpreted as political statements and enactments of organizational power. Later in this ethnography, 'Kitty', a BTC 'change manager' from the team responsible for the aesthetic makeovers of various parts of the site that were

deemed tired and in need of change, would replace Rupert as one of the two gatekeepers for this project, for reasons that were never quite made clear, but which seemed to coincide with Rupert losing interest in the project's objectives and becoming more closely involved with senior leadership activities that exceeded the boundaries of the BTC site.

ii.   Gatekeepers

My first gatekeepers would shape this ethnography and how I was able to access (or not) certain teams and spaces at the BTC. They decided my overall itinerary; which teams I was able to spend time with and for how long. They made the introductions to each team manager and I was allowed to shadow and observe various teams (some of which dealt with confidential information or technology strategy at the bank) via the authority I carried from these gatekeepers, who were both quite well known among the hundreds of staff members at the BTC, due to their high profile as part of the leadership committee and from site visits and other internal marketing campaigns and materials. At their request I reported 'findings' to them at regular intervals throughout the ethnography, and before sharing these with the teams I had been studying. Our meetings were informal and usually carried out over hot drinks in the various 'breakout spaces' of the site, where lounge furniture and retro wallpaper at a site Starbucks would frame our feedback sessions. I would then present a final draft version of an 'insights report' to my gatekeepers and the manager of the team who I had been shadowing, before the draft was finalised, based on their feedback, and this was sent to a limited number of stakeholders at the BTC (gatekeepers and each team manager would usually share more widely as per their discretion). The outcomes (the insights reports and presentations) of the 'sprints' of research (a term from Agile working that so pervaded the consciousness of those at the BTC), several weeks per technology team, were therefore bounded by the narratives my gatekeepers wanted to hear and were expecting. For example, they were keen to understand that team culture could be improved by implementing certain strategies such as the aesthetic makeovers of spaces. The informality of the reporting and the autonomy I was given in day to day activities spent with each technology team, as long as I 'checked

in' with gatekeepers for regular updates and meetings, allowed this research the freedom and flexibility to follow different team members and ideas across this large site, testing these out on my gatekeepers and the managers of each technology team I spent time with. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this research project started with an interest in cyborgs (following Donna Harraway's work – 1985, 1989), but rather than this concept and the theme of techno-human hybridity finding productive discussions and examples at the fieldsite, what instead was interesting was the lack of interest in picking up this concept in terms of the work technologists and managers were themselves doing at the BTC. What became far more intriguing were the relations between the BTC and its 'global hubs' in other parts of the world, as well as conditions for contractors working at the BTC from abroad, who were predominantly Indian. It is here that what became this intellectual project to understand the BTC as *postcolony* - following from Mbembe (1992, 2001) – began and developed. The objectives of my gatekeepers for continuing to support this project for the duration of my long stay would evolve over time with the demands on their roles and the changing priorities of the organisation; the usefulness of this project to them ebbed and flowed. As González has argued, post-colonial research is emergent (2003), and this project's exposure to several 'fiefdoms' or 'thiefdoms' (the chosen word of Angela to describe technology teams at the BTC, which always resonated with me as a term for a colony of thieves – such as former British penal colonies such as Australia have been described (Keneally, 2007)) or technology teams and their different worlds, has allowed a making sense of the field to happen over time, once embodied practice in the field and writing up outside its physical boundaries of the BTC site security gates has been completed. The narrative which follows is one that seeks to build this rich picture of the BTC and its legacies of Empire via exploring a part of the BTC and a part of the research problem, one 'thiefdom' at a time.

iii.   Methodology

This ethnography undertook 'sprints' (short periods of work, usually 6 weeks) of ethnographic study with four specific teams at the BTC, along with time to study the liminal spaces of the site, 'hang around' with other teams during periods of

time when I was not under obligation by my gatekeepers, and explore activities going on at the BTC outside of formal working hours or activities, such as lunchtime seminars, charity sales, farmers markets, bouncy castle events, BBQs, the hosting of school students for mentoring sessions, and events outside the boundaries of the BTC such as 'Incubator' and 'Accelerator' spaces in trendy industrial offices in the city centre (far removed from the remote countryside of the BTC).

Each day of fieldwork called for a slightly different approach to data collection within the ethnographic canon; always hand written fieldnotes – in a notebook specifically reserved for each team I studied, or a different one for events and people I found, observed and spoke with outside the boundaries of the official designated teams and the official designated times of ethnography prescribed by my gatekeepers.

The significance of and link between fieldnotes to ethnographic study has traditionally been very strong for ethnographers, with Denzin's assertion that fieldwork 'requires careful recording (through fieldnotes)' in order to make sense of a culture (1981), one long concurred with. However, the approach taken by this research study mirrors more closely the attitude of Van Maanen when he writes of all the other work that takes place both in and out of the bounded fieldsite for the ethnographer to come to terms with what is going on there:

'Fieldwork, at its core, is a long social process of coming to terms with a culture. It is a process that begins before one enters the field and continues long after one leaves it. The working out of understandings may be symbolised by fieldnotes, but the intellectual activities that support such understandings are unlikely to be found in the daily records….coming to understand a culture…is a deeply interpretative process….Culture is not to be found in some set of discrete observations that can somehow be summed up numerically and organised narratively to provide full understanding.' (2011. P.118).

Indeed, the fieldnotes I would scrawl each day in the moment of capturing phenomena were only able to capture a partial representation of the field, one defined by the minutiae of interactions and the words spoken by my interlocutors.

I would also note my own feelings in the moment and any reflections as soon as there was a lull in the ethnographic action. The awareness of the fallibility of my own memory, that my recollections of specific events would fade, kept me vigilant about highlighting (in bright colours in my notebooks) the events that stood out as important, unusual or which engendered a strong intellectual or sensual reaction in me.

Visual research was another important methodological tool for this research study, capturing images of the artefacts of the field, the spaces of the field and images that may seem of inconsequential emptiness to an outsider if they were to look through my photographs – an office block through a window, a picture of the carpet pattern at my feet, an old bannister – but which triggered rich memories in this 'fieldworker', memories that stretched into feelings and to stories, helping me to navigate around the remembered fieldsite once my time on the physical site of the BTC was over.

Participant observation and 'active listening' were fundamental and entwined ethnographic research methods that I would not hae been able to complete this research study without. The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (2008) describes active listening as:

'a set of techniques designed to focus the attention of the interviewer or observer on the speaker. The goal of active listening is to attend entirely to the speaker, not to oneself or one's own inner dialogue, with the goal of accurately hearing and interpreting the speaker's verbal and nonverbal communication.' (Given, p.2).

My own anxieties about being in the field and this research study were many, however it was important that I put these disquieting thoughts aside during the process of ethnographic interviewing (usually interviews carried out in the context of the interlocutors day to day work, at their desk, attending meetings and walking through corridors or to break for a hot drink). To be able to reflect the concerns of the interlocutor as much as possible rather than overinterpret, I would usually let

the interviewee speak uninterrupted as much as possible, prompting only where necessary or where specific pieces of information were required to understand the topic at hand. My fieldnotes would include non-verbal cues in the body language and behaviour of the interlocutor, and what impression they had on me (I felt they were being evasive, I felt they were being passive aggressive, I felt they were being honest, etc). It is important to say here, that this research study attempts an impressionistic ethnography – one that offers a symbolic interpretivist epistemology, a 'tale that unfolds event by event', meeting 'matters of disciplinary or methodological concern…in irregular and unexpected ways.' (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 104). As I used my handwritten, categorised, and highlighted fieldnotes (all 9 notebooks and countless pieces of paper and photographs of the field), to re-read my ethnographic fieldwork experience and begin to weave together a narrative for this PhD thesis, I was struck by the creativity of this process. There was a freedom and a poetry to it, that no other academic experience had offered me; an opportunity to create a story from a diverse and fragmentary collection of stories and reflections of real people my fieldnotes had recorded. As James Clifford writes: 'to recognise the poetic dimension of ethnography does not require one to give up facts and accurate accounting' (1986, p.25-26), and in fact the ethnographic monograph may take readers closer to the truths of organization than any other research methodology, with its poetic license and departure from overarching truth claims and generalisability key reasons why.

In terms of the number of interviews carried out during this ethnography, I have counted this to be 196, however this number could be altered upwards if we were to count the slippage of comments inserted into ethnographic interviews by colleagues of interviewees sitting at the next desks, or when speaking with groups who gave short but confirmatory answers to questions, or those I spoke with but briefly at the various out of hours events organised by the BTC or which members of the BTC attended. Data was also gathered via participant observation, a stalwart of ethnographic methodology, and which provided many of the inspirations and insights for the key contributions this work is attempting to make. The total number of people working at the BTC was a very slippery number to get hold of in

the first place, with the site grounds Manager informing me with a smile that it was technically about 2,000 people (in 2015) but that 'nobody really knows, it could be closer to 4,000…I just know the car park is getting fuller!' (October, 2015). The longer I stayed ensconced in the field, the more access I was able to obtain, to staff from different technology teams who would ask their colleagues if they could 'borrow' me or speak with me, to staff who worked on the on-site gym who wanted me to have an induction, or to 'Stewards' in hospitality uniforms, to catering staff and those who had worked at the site but who had since retired or left, whose details were passed my way. The emergent nature of this kind of informal access was something I did not expect, and which I always delighted in – especially when someone sought me out via email or walked over to introduce themselves, or was willing to sit and talk to me when I asked them and they knew who I was. I began to notice this opening of access boundaries as my own attachment to the site increased with each passing week and month, a sign I had begun to trust and feel increasingly comfortable with my positionality at the site, just as those working at the BTC had become increasingly comfortable and used to me. This experience created what Iversen has called the 'disengagement blur' (2009), as I intentionally managed a protracted exit from the BTC, to make the story last a little bit longer, avoiding turning the final page. I requested to attend team meetings and specific on-site events for several months after my official time on site agreed with my gatekeepers had come to an end. The fragmented nature of the 'sprint' ethnographies meant that there was no one official end date, but each time I finished working with a team I would feel a certain poignancy, an underdeveloped grief that had to be intellectualised into the process of writing up my fieldnotes.

The following chapters will address various aspects of the research problem and positioning detailed above. Chapter 2 will describe the ubiquitous brands at the Bank Technology Centre, and discuss the significance of the persistent, static image of the white, male technology entrepreneur for understanding colonising modes of organising at the BTC. This will be done in the context of introducing Achille Mbembe's work on the

'Postcolony' to make sense of the fieldwork at the BTC, and by exploring ethnographically the work of the 'Mini-Apps' team at the BTC.

Chapter 3 will describe a space at the BTC called the 'CoLab' and introduce the 'Cheque Imaging Project' (CIP). The work methodology of 'Agile' will be discussed as a 'colonising mode of organising', where we can begin to see the consequences of the brand of the technology entrepreneur materialise, in the treatment and experiences of non-white technologists from abroad, working in the CoLab under tightly controlled conditions and precarious employment contracts.

Chapter 4 will draw out the implications of this project's ethnographic findings for Achille Mbembe's concept of Postcolony, engaging in detail with Mbembe's work and the implications of findings from the previous chapters on both debates in organization and business and management studies, and the practical implications for managers in post-colonial era organizations, and those at the BTC specifically.

Chapter 5 will explore the languages of war and violence that were found to be so common in one building at the BTC in particular, 'The Tower', and their significance for understanding this organization in particular. War metaphors are discussed as reflective of the intense work regimes found to be common place at the 'Tower' at the BTC: a phallic signifier of organization that reflects the phallic Postcolony we will discuss in this chapter. The aftermath of the British Empire in relations between managers at the BTC and staff in developing countries working for the bank's 'global hubs' are also explored here.

Our Conclusion will then follow, offering a summary of the learnings and contributions from each section of this thesis, and will muse on the potential for a future of postcolony in organization: for research and praxis. This chapter will also reiterate the contribution of a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony* to business, management and organization scholarship.

Chapter 2

Colonising brands: The bank vanishes

This chapter will explore brands at the bank technology centre (BTC) as the first encounter I had as an ethnographic researcher with what this chapter will unpack as a colonising 'mode of organising' (to borrow Ceilia Lury's phrase, 2004). By first exploring and unpacking the brand images and the histories behind these we find at the BTC, we can better explain the proliferation of the work methodology of Agile at the BTC, the BTC as the space and time of Mbembe's postcolony, and the languages of war that we shall examine in the next chapters.

Brands as spaces, concepts and objects that can exercise control over those who work in organizations has been well researched in organization studies scholarship over the last decade (Müller, 2016, 2018; Edwards, 2005; Cushen, 2009; Kornberger, 2010; Land & Taylor, 2010), with Lury's work providing an important contribution from a cultural economy perspective, exploring branding as an assemblage that shapes markets (2004, 2009). Employees have been argued to internalise the brands proliferated by their organizations of work, whereupon identities and the sense of self become 'branded' too (Bergstrom, Blumenthal and Crothers, 2002; Boyd & Sutherland, 2006; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Chong, 2007). The brand as a means of normative control within organizations has been theorised as an alignment of identity with the organisation's brands: (Cushen, 2009; Edwards, 2005; Kornberger, 2010; Land & Taylor, 2010), and 'internal branding' has been argued by Müller (2016) as 'unlike traditional forms of normative control', which has been a popular research theme in culture management debates within organization studies (Casey, 1995; Barley and Kunda, 1992; Willmott, 1993).'Brand-centred control' involves the external audience (in the case of the BTC customers of the bank and the wider public) being conscripted into the act of branding. Brands as a production of difference (Lury, 2004), but also a production of simulation and colonisation will be explored in this chapter. We will describe how damage to the bank's brand following the financial crash of 2007, unprecedented new market competition and a drive towards 'the appification of everything' (ICTC, 2014), has led senior

leaders at the bank to attempt to shift the brands found at the BTC into two narratives: A) a bright digital future of a disembodied, dematerialised, and de-racialised 'bank of the future' and B) A bank of 'global values', 'integrity' and 'stewardship'. This strategy of self-preservation of the bank via marketing and PR is found to date back to practices from the era of the British Empire and its aftermath in former colonies, when the bank (and its brand) was known as 'the Colonial Bank'. This chapter will specifically examine the different brand images found at the BTC during 2014-2016; both 'internal branding' (Monika Müller, 2016) and those brands developed for external marketing to the bank's customers. Following Collins' call for a critical analysis of branded management fads (2003), this chapter develops the proposition that brands at the BTC are a representation of the bank de-materialising into the smartphone app, following an attempt to mimic Silicon Valley technology companies. The branding of the bank can also be likened to trends in post-bureaucratic organizations for flexibilisation and building employee trust (Grey and Garsten, 2001) via a drive to autonomous work teams (Hodgson, 2004; Josserand, Teo and Clegg, 2006) (such as 'Agile' teams at the BTC, which we will explore in chapter 3). The move towards emphasising brand at the BTC is a process argued to be intimately tied to the offshoring and outsourcing of the bank's technology functions to developing countries (such as India, Lithuania and the Philippines) – a contemporary mode of colonisation in global capitalism. These practices, and the work to protect and differentiate the bank's brands, are found to be a continuation of the bank's Imperial history and neo-colonial present, which can be understood as a colonising mode of organising the past, present and future of the bank. The work of one team at the BTC supporting 'Mini-apps' is explored ethnographically in this chapter, in order to demonstrate that the promises a de-materialised, disembodied, de-racialised future of organization are a myth that mask a colonising mode of organizing at work at the BTC through 2014-2016.

Competition for hearts and minds

From my first visit to the BTC I was struck by the marketing images adorning every floor of each of the 6 office buildings, the liminal spaces such as the restaurant and walled pathways between buildings, and I would later be affected by the vivid images and stories conjured from the imaginations, myths and memories of technologists and managers working at the site. Brand at the BTC was worth investigating, as these images posed many questions to their

viewers: What did it mean to be a bank in 2016? What is a 'bank of the future' (one of the most popular brand slogans to be found on the walls of the BTC), and what were some of the more odd or even troubling images trying to tell us? (Such as a young, attractive woman choosing which shoes to buy to advertise a credit card or a white man instructing a group of Indian men with a tagline of 'stewardship' to advertise the bank's CSR policies – see *Figure 8*). At the middle of the BTC, where a huge proliferation of brand images were to be found, was an office building called 'Babbage House', the first building I had entered to meet my gatekeepers back in 2014. Here LED screens, posters, wall art such as graffiti and murals, cardboard marketing signs, framed T-shirts, and other branded objects to represent the bank's various services and technology products were placed in the eye-line of the staff and visitors moving through Babbage House, so as to make them unavoidable messages about the bank; what it was, what it stood for, and what it could offer to customers.

At the time of this ethnography, the UK banking industry, where the so called 'big 4' banks enjoyed 77% of market share for retail customers, and 85% of small business banking (2015 figures: Dunkley, 2015), was facing commercial, public relations and regulatory challenges. The industry was being forced to accept competition by regulators (the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), were both set up following the dissolution of the Financial Services Authority (FSA) in 2013) to improve account choice for customers and to open up a very established and oligopolistic market following the financial crisis of 2007. In 2010 the first banking license in over a century was granted by the Bank of England to a new 'challenger bank', and the years 2013-2016 saw 14 new licenses being issued by regulators, with many more firms seeking licenses. This unprecedented flourishing of competition and the change in market conditions the big UK banks were operating in, coupled with a 'PR problem' faced by these banks since the financial crisis: '[there has been] a substantial deterioration in the favourability of public attitudes towards the banking industry' (Bennett and Kottasz, 2012), had seen the big 4 banks focus on creating what marketing scholars such as Fombrum (1995) have called 'strong and consistent brand images…hidden assets that give them a distinct competitive advantage' (p.1).

The race for most valuable brand in a competitive banking market, where, in addition to the challenges above, 'the biggest fear is whether banks get Amazon-ed', (Steenis, 2018) as large technology companies such as Amazon and Alibaba offer financial services to their customers, who then leave established banks for these new, exciting challengers (Alibaba's financial business is equivalent to the ninth largest US bank as of 2018 - Ibid), was being played out at the BTC form 2014-2016. This fear of obsolescence thanks to large tech firms was a story I would hear repeated many times by managers of all teams at the BTC, and it was one reason the ability to create 'the most powerful images' (Klein, 2000, p.3) within the brands of the bank had become very important. Kitty, the manager of site aesthetics and change programmes who would become one of this project's gatekeepers, told me of the importance of branding at one discussion over coffee in a lounge area of Babbage House: 'There's so much going on here, we need to get the message out there and shout about it!' Kitty liked to meet in the collection of 'breakout areas' in Babbage House; some styled with tartan armchairs and traditional wallpaper with art deco milieu, some with the bank's name emblazoned on scaled up credit cards on the walls; all the decorative objects that adorned these areas impeccably branded. These spaces were all the result of the renovation programme CRES – the division Kitty worked for in charge of the site's aesthetic change - was pursuing for the BTC, a drive to transform every building from 'tired corporate office space', according to Kitty, into a vision of the future. Rehn has argued that 'the cool of popular culture is becoming a valued asset that managers covet and companies try to colonize' (2008, following the work of Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007), and we can therefore see the attraction of the cultural success stories of Silicon Valley technology firms as a brand the bank was attempting to utilise as a colonising force at the BTC, where aesthetics would often mimic Google offices according to Kitty. This 'cool of popular culture' was also predominantly based on the image of the successful, white male technology entrepreneur, and in this we can begin to see a saviour complex underpinning the bank's brand images; the technology entrepreneur instilling hope and faith among staff at the BTC such as Kitty that brands will rescue the bank's fortunes from the threats it faces.

Cyborgs and white men

The images CRES and senior leadership at the bank had decided held the most contemporary brand power to communicate their brand messages included brand A) 'the bank of the future' - as one huge mural on a large wall on the first floor of Babbage House proudly announced (see *Figure 7*). The bank of the future was represented by images of cyborgs, robots, figures of futuristic cartoons which held smartphones and wore sci-fi fashions reminiscent of Bladerunner and Ghost in the Shell. These images depicted a future promise of a 'paperless', 'contactless' world of digital and frictionless money and transactions. This world was a utopian science fiction the bank wanted to sell its customers and staff, filled with technology 'building tomorrows bank' (as another mural declared), seamlessly attached to the human body in prostheses such as glasses and watches and jewellery. Customers had become de-materialised, de-racialised figures somewhere between human and machine (Haraway's conception of a cyborg with no history beyond technological invention perhaps - 1991) in these images, with masks covering their human features and bodies barely needed as - in the same large mural - some flew across the sky in a Jetson's style cross between a car and a spaceship. A framed piece of blue material with a white printed image of a car representing the time-traveling DeLorean of the 1985 film 'Back to the Future', stares down from another wall of the Babbage House ground floor, with a play on words slogan below the image: 'App to the future'. These images, straplines, and the ways in which managers at the BTC spoke about them, represented a bank enabled above all else by the app, with these 'bank of the future' brands at the BTC in service to application technology and its promises and possibilities.

Our other category of brands at the BTC were internal brand images that emphasised B) a 'global' bank of 'stewardship' and 'integrity'. These words were two of the bank's five 'values' often found written on physical artefacts around the site and emblazoned on the bank's internal online spaces such as the intranet. These were a point of dissonance from the former brand messages; focussed on reminding internal bank staff at the BTC what the bank stood for, and the kinds of employees they should be to work there. 'Integrity' and 'stewardship' were words emblazoned on a large pillar in graffiti font next to the framed time-travelling car, and the 'values' branding was just as ubiquitous across the BTC as the brands of de-

materialised apps. In the toilets of 'The Tower' office building, I find a framed poster containing the image of a white male employee of the bank sitting at a table with a group of silent Indian men, explaining something using his hands. The caption of the image reads: 'Good for local workers and for us'. In the testimony of Service Managers from the Middleware team (see chapter 5) low paid and insecure working contracts were discussed as common for the bank's sub-contracted workers in India, who, according to managers involved in the recruitment process, often had little bargaining power and accepted such terms of employment. This coupled with the sentiments of happiness I would hear workers from the bank's 'strategic hubs' in both India and Lithuania express when they were offered the chance to re-locate for work in the UK, at various teams at the BTC, jarred with the branding of an organization enacting global stewardship and taking care of local workers in their communities. In fact, several staff at the BTC would comment on how un-concerned with labour far removed from its brand and renovated UK buildings such as the BTC the bank really was; 'It's not really our problem (the working conditions of sub-contractors in India)', one technologist told me. As well as the sub-contracting of work to former British colonies, the off-shoring of de-skilled technology functions to India, Lithuania and the Philippines was also common practice for the bank, as well as an 'in-out' relationship with South Africa: the bank was selling off its stake in a bank there at the time of this ethnography, but that market was being re-entered by the time of writing this in 2018, as a 'promising opportunity' (Steenis, 2018).

The history of colonial domination, violence and exploitation cannot be omitted from an analysis of the 'global bank' brands we find at the BTC in 2014-2016, therefore a brief sketch of how these foreshadow what the bank and its brands will become will follow here. India was colonised under the expansion of early global capitalism via the East India Company in the eighteenth century, followed by the British Raj era of colonial rule in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, during which time millions of Indian citizens perished due to poverty and a succession of devastating famines that contemporary historians have attributed directly to imperial rule and the economic policies forced on India during these years: 'it was the very process of incorporation into a global capitalist economy that gave the famines their terrible potency' (Davies, 2001). Britain's exploitation of the agriculture, natural resources and labour of India, while simultaneously pricing local businesses out of local

markets for goods such as textiles, lead to a 0% per capita growth in India between 1600 and 1870, and 0.2% growth rate from 1870-1947 (Sachs, 2005). When the Colonial Bank entered the Indian market in 1938, it purchased the Central Exchange Bank of India, which made 'the cleavage between overseas trade and overland trade a product of "European domination"' (Roy, 2014). Local merchants and moneylenders were forced out of local financial markets, with the bank benefiting from this new monopolistic position (Ibid). This legacy of economic colonisation and violence is carried into a 'violence of representation' (Escobar, 1995, p.103) in the 'global bank' brand, and its values of 'stewardship' and 'integrity' (brand B). Etymologically 'Stewardship' is defined as a 'responsible use of resources in the services of God' (etymonline.com, 2018), and we may draw a line from the branding of this word at the BTC in 2014-2016 back to the bank's colonial roots, where commercial banking was to be brought to territories throughout the British Empire 'along British lines' (Archiveshub, 2018), to exploit 'a virgin financial market for loans' in British colonies, focussing on 'local development' (Cowen, 1984). However, if we note that six years following the Colonial Bank entering West African markets, no loans had been offered to local West Africans, as 'the West African still had a lot to learn about business methods' (Cowen, 1984). Was this an example of colonial era Stewardship at the bank in practice? Mbembe has written that the Western discourse on Africa assumes that through 'a process of domestication and training' the African can be led to a point where he or she may 'enjoy a fully human life. In this perspective, Africa is essentially…an object of experimentation' (2001, p.2). Monotheism is as equally culpable for colonial violence according to Mbembe, and the echoes of Kipling's 'white man's burden' in the presumed responsibilities of the loaded 'Stewardship' branding and 'good for local workers and for us' poster we find at the BTC in 2016, is an attitude that we find remains pertinent in contemporary life at the bank. The deliberate whitewashing of the brands of the BTC to cover over the intimate ties to colonial rule is also nothing new, with the bank changing its name at the end of Empire in the 1950s from Dominion, Colonial and Overseas to DCO bank 'thus diluting its imperial overtone' (Archiveshub, 2018).

In such brand images and their messages we find at the BTC in 2014-2016 then, we can see the changing shape of the bank's colonial legacies: 'We were a global bank, now the drive is to be trans-atlantic…it's from the new American leaders.' These the words of a senior business leader at the BTC in 2016, who explained that this change of global strategy, which was quite

cyclical and would change every 3-4 years with the tenure of each CEO, meant selling off interests in developing countries such as those in Africa and Latin America, with real consequences for the staff (and customers) of the bank in those countries, as they were de-branded and left behind, the bank moving on to other markets. This strategy of empire building and withdrawal, was also in no way new for this bank. As 'The Colonial Bank' during the rule of British Empire in the 19th and first half of the 20th century in many former colonies, this bank and its British staff were often referred to as 'the bankers of Empire' (Decker, 2005, p.4) by native populations of British colonies. The reason for this was the bank's continuation of organisational forms closely associated with the imperial system once Empire had officially ended, including 'unfair and racial treatment of African employees' as one study of this bank's Nigerian business post-Empire describes (Ibid, p. 15). Controlling the reputation of the bank to mitigate bad publicity was a key strategy as the British Empire ended, including introducing 'public relations measures' to combat the image of a neo-colonial bank in the 1950s and 1960s (Ibid), and pulling out of South Africa in 1986 once anti-apartheid protests in the UK began boycotting this bank and damaging its brand. The bank admitted the reason for leaving South Africa at this time was 'our customer base was beginning to be adversely affected' (SAHO, 2017) and the brand was beginning to be damaged in the UK and abroad (see *Figure 3* for an example of the branding used against the bank during this time). As the colonial era ended 'problems of control and fear for...reputation' meant the bank 'guarded its name and the spread eagle logo carefully' (Decker, 2005, p.4). We can see the brand image found at the BTC in 2016 representing a positive exchange between 'local workers' and 'us' the bank, as a continuation of this protection of the bank's image as it continues in extracting value from former colonies and developing countries (see also *Figure 2* for examples of marketing images showing the raw materials the bank helped foreign business access in the 'Gold Coast' (Ghana pre-independence) and a language of 'romantic' colonisation of Kenya during its period as 'The Colonial Bank'). Brand itself was therefore found to be acting as a force for the continued colonisation of people and resources at the bank, a means to organise and dominate the cultural as well as economic production (Klein, 2000; Bradshaw, McDonagh and Marshall, 2006) of what the bank envisions itself to be in UK and overseas markets.

It is at this juncture then that this project fully introduces the work of Achille Mbembe and the importance of his concept of 'postcolony' to this conversation; to the task of helping to

translate the ethnographic experiences of the field to an understanding of the post-Empire, post-colony legacy of this bank.

Mbembe fully develops the concept of 'postcolony' in his 2001 seminal work (published originally in French in 2000), which 'identifies a specific historical trajectory – that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonisation and the violence which the colonial relationship involves' (1992, p.3), that is, the idea, the experience and the time of postcolony. This important book for post-colonial thinking in late capitalism developed aspects of previous works (*Provisional Notes on the Postcolony*, 1992; *La 'Chose' et ses doubles dans la caricature camerounaise*, 1996), however, in *On the Postcolony*, we find a thorough explication of time, subjectivity and embodiment from the perspective of Mbembe's African intellectual activism. The phenomenol destructiveness of colonial power structures and the complicitness of the post-colonised African subject in the maintenance of these are harshly critiqued by Mbembe, and his deconstruction of phallo-and-Euro-centric religious discourse is particularly important for his project (as we discuss in more detail in chapter 5). We can see calls from within CMS for organization studies to work towards a new 'polycentric world order' (Mignolo, 2011) that deconstructs and de-centres white, Western knowledge systems based on masculine normativity as an ally to Mbembe's project in this shared aim. As Mbembe reasons in his 2002 work 'African Modes of Self-writing':

'In many ways, colonisation was a co-invention'…'as a refracted and endlessly reconstituted fabric of fictions, colonialism generated mutual utopias – hallucinations shared by the colonisers and the colonised' (p.262-263).

This difficult nature of the co-constructed postcolony is one Mbembe sees as vital post-colonial societies confront in order to move on form, particularly as 'in a contemporary neoliberal order that claims to have gone beyond the racial, the struggle for racial justice must take new forms' (Mbembe, 2016, p.45). Mbembe's works have sought to challenge the historical notions and histories of colonisation and its aftermath, with a strong focus on temporality and identities formed and organized by the categories of Blackness and Race. Mbembe's more recent work has focussed on the of tracing of a 'genealogy of the category of blackness' (2017), and the consequences of white Euro-centric power waning in the 21st

century. Throughout his works, Mbembe has also maintained a concern with trajectory and space as enablers of material experience and embodied identity, and this thesis aims to work with Mbembe's postcolony in a new context and dialogue; the technology centre of a global bank, seeking new ways of understanding the postcolony time, space and experience for studies of organization. In the ethnographic details to come, we will explore how time and space are being structured by the colonial history of the bank, alongside the drive to rebrand the bank – from a bank, with all the history and technical baggage that brings with it, into an app (application), a virtual, disembodied organization. Race as a category and lived reality in particular disappears in this paradigm, as the workers and customers who make up the bank become universalised into 'digital app customers', rather than embodied human beings who use physical bank branches, disappearing, just as the bank itself does, into the digital application.

App to the future

'We have a Google culture here, like a start-up'. The leader of the 'Digital Apps' team at the BTC, a middle-aged, wiry man in faded blue jeans and a crisp white shirt, who had been instructive in the development of the bank's original payment app 'Ping-it' several years earlier (arguably the start of what we will come on to describe as 'appification' of the bank), tells me over at one of the break out spaces of Babbage House, surrounded by brand images. He talks to me about how the BTC and its buildings and culture should be emulating those of technology 'fin-tech' (financial technology) start-ups and Silicon Valley giants (those same firms senior leaders at the bank fear are taking away the banks' business). This is to better compete in the 'New World' as he calls these changed competitive market conditions the bank is having to adapt and respond to. The 'New World' was an expression I would learn to be a common turn of phrase at the BTC, a phrase filled both with excitement and anxiety for the bank's future. We can find in this term another artefact of the Colonial Bank and the language of colonialism: referring perhaps to a 'terrestrial paradise', as Christopher Columbus insisted of the Americas - not new lands, but those originally belonging to Europe and Christendom all along (Smith, 2004), (the link between these new lands and the Bible were also used as justification for the English territorial claim to North America, as an aside (Winchcombe, 2016)), or the othering of a world far removed geographically and culturally

from Europe and the 'Old World', including monstrous images of cannibalism and animalistic behaviour proliferated by colonial texts, serving 'as a convenient screen for European fears and phantasies and for the realities of colonial violence' (Llewelyn Price, 2003).

As we squat on high metal stools at the large Starbucks café in Babbage House, BTC staff rushing by us to meetings in one of the breakout areas or to join the constant queue for coffee, this leader talks about how many digital teams such as his are 'about experimenting with new ways of working, like the CoLab, and the Command Centre' which he reiterated to me were an important 'part of the brand' of the BTC. The CoLab was a renovated building at the BTC opened in 2015 which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter as the home of 'Agile working' at the bank, and the Command Centre was a newly built space for monitoring threats and enacting 'war games', in a building called 'The Tower', which we shall come back to in chapter 5. This digital leader and his team stay in an open plan, glass-walled space in Babbage House where some games consoles and other technology gadgets are available for the all-male team (apart from two female secretaries) to 'have a go' on, inspired apparently by the Google office layout, and to foster 'a culture of creativity' according to this leader. He wants to encourage as many managers and technologists on site as possible to join in activities run by CRES in order to feel part of the brand of the bank, an agenda shared by this project's gatekeepers, especially Kitty. He explains how such collective activities can reiterate the embodied nature of the bank's brand for those who do get involved, 'The Hackathons, accelerator collaborations, talks with external stakeholders from Microsoft and Google…these can bring people here together…we're building something, we're building the bank right here'. There was a distinctive awe of the large Silicon Valley technology firms in his words, as well as the genesis of the lean, agile 'start-ups' they had come from, and the male entrepreneurs who had started these firms: 'Did you know the founder of Alibaba was an English teacher? His philosophy is 'I am a teacher'. We're not just leading our teams here, we are coaching and developing our teams for the future.' The Digital Apps leader says this with admiration and seriousness, as he tells me about a culture of learning at site events such as those 'Hackathons' – another explicit attempt at simulation of the culture of the tech giants and their entrepreneurial creators.

Branded Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurs have been discussed in organization studies as culturally stereotypical figures who engage in creative destruction (Anderson and Warren, 2011), as the desirable kind of body for a leader at organizations such as an airport (O'Doherty, 2017), as mouthpieces for social and moral concerns of their historical context (Clarke and Holt, 2009), and the identity of the successful entrepreneur has been theorised as an outcome of bricolage (Lennerfors and Rehn, 2014). All these renderings of the entrepreneurial figure go beyond a normative business and management notion of the entrepreneur as the achievement hungry individual (Johnson, 1990) whose body is one of self-reliance and risk taking (Lee and Tsang, 2001), and whose organization embodies innovation as a praxis (Smith, 1967). Ozkazanc-Pan has developed the idea of 'identity formation' to describe how globalised relationships between entrepreneurs develop in contemporary society, based on a post-colonial understanding of, among other things, the ways masculinised images of entrepreneurship circulate and proliferate to the detriment of women in business, or the 'gendered subalternizing discourses of high-technology entrepreneurship' (2009). It was becoming clear that the figure of the entrepreneur was understood by senior managers at the BTC, such as the leader of the digital apps team, as a very powerful myth, an embodiment of success in the 'new world' that the bank must strive towards and mimic.

A fantasy the bank could not do without, the figure of the entrepreneur was ubiquitous at the BTC; in the 'Hackathon' events that made teams 'think and fail fast' according to the leader of the Digital Apps team. This was an imitation of the start-up mentality born in Silicon Valley, a belief that the bank was re-making itself as free of the shackles of corporate liabilities and regulation that was being metered out on the UK banking sector post-financial crisis, and instead as a fresh, nimble and essentially neoliberal project of autonomy, success and individualism that characterises the image of the entrepreneur (Essers, 2009). Entrepreneurial activities also acted as markers of time through the year, whether in the Hackathons or the 'Accelerator' and 'incubator' projects that saw the bank invest in business ideas senior leaders believed could provide a competitive advantage for the future. Many of these seemed to disappear, or at best become subsumed into the "BAU" of the BTC – business as usual services with complex social and technical architectures that stretched over time and space, across servers, teams and customers all over the world, and the antithesis to the

fantasy of entrepreneurial freedom from heavy corporate structures these products were meant to represent. "We did have a specific digital tower, to try new stuff, but now that's been folded back into the other structures" One Team Leader from the Apps Hosting team explained to me that attempts to make the bank something different than what it was, to test new products or ways of bringing products to market could not escape the spectre of the bank, or as he put it, "the bankification of everything" (Team Manager, App Hosting, 2016). (I use the term 'bankification' here as an annonymisation of the bank's brand name, which was in fact the term used by this Team Manager, and two other members of his team to talk about these issues). The inability of entrepreneurial practices, or those which aimed to be entrepreneurial, to gain traction within the bank, despite the value clearly placed on the image of such endeavours, highlighted the illusory nature of entrepreneurial praxis to those working at the BTC, how the desire to imitate a start-up was a phantasm that could never be realised, but which everyone had to believe in in order to promote the marketing messages of this bank's future (to each other, other internal stakeholders and to customers).

The artefacts of the organization also revealed a longing for team members and managers to take on an entrepreneur identity; 'We value a casual dress code here, you can dress how you want' one member of the Digital Apps team told me, explaining why he chose to wear a suit when most of his team mates wore hoodies and jeans to the office. Post-It notes were an especially visible symbol of the entrepreneur, 'they can easily be thrown away and we start from scratch', another member of the Digital Apps team told me in 2014. Ideas for new software (app) products or features and work in progress updates were strewn across walls in a rainbow of post-It notes in the spaces this team inhabited, and not only in the Digital Apps team but across the BTC too, on the walls of glass meeting rooms and almost all available whiteboard space. The entrepreneur has been problematized by Jones and Spicer as a Lacanian 'empty signifier, an open space or 'lack' whose operative function is not to 'exist'…but to structure phantasmic attachment' (2005, p.235). We may take this further and say at the BTC the entrepreneur *is* a phantasmic attachment, an illusion of itself that the bank seeks to maintain, in a "new world" where competition, new technologies and banking regulation are existential threats to 'our big bank on the high street' (as one customer service operator would describe the bank to me in 2016). The more time I spent at the BTC, the further embedded I found the entrepreneur to be at the BTC- not only in brand images and

artefacts of culture such as dress code and language, but in the ways those at the BTC were thinking about themselves, their futures and the futures of their customers (or customers of the future). The masculine heroism of the entrepreneur spoke loudly in the spaces of the BTC, as the Digital Apps team perfectly attested to this. With an all-male management team and team of technologists, there were only three women on the team, who took up administrative and support roles, playing their roles as enablers of the visions of these brave new men in a brave new world.

Mbembe's incisive explication of the problem at the heart of contemporary systems of organising, which produce Blackness and Race as 'the product of a social and technological machine tightly linked to the emergence and globalisation of capitalism' (Ibid, p.6), leads us straight back to the static figure of the white, male, Silicon Valley technology entrepreneur too. The figure that has so inspired , haunted and stratified the brands and work methodologies of the BTC into its own classifications of categories and numbers (for example 'T-shirt sizes', 'sprint durations', etc) and regimes of colonising work at the BTC into disembodied, universalised practices and branding ('app to the future', 'bank of the future'). Mbembe's work is important here as he argues that the myths of Race and Blackness are the consequence of the myths of Whiteness and the West, as the latter historically have attempted to naturalise and universalise themselves, often against the former (2017), and in a similar way we can see this process happening once again with the normalisation of the technology 'entrepreneur' as an ideal figure of leadership and success at the BTC. Mbembe also argues however that it is impossible to disentangle these two sets of fictions (Whiteness and its opposite(s)), that to do so will require the deconstruction of each (2002, p.258). These entangled myths mean that colonising forces (those that categorise bodies and time) are still alive and dangerous today in all forms of organization, those which have refused to die with the colony, that live on as permanent 'water marks' in Stoler's terms (2008). 'The fierce colonial desire to divide and classify, to create hierarchies and produce difference, leaves behind wounds and scars. Worse, it created a fault line that lives on.' (Mbembe, 2017, p.7). This fault line can be found in a political demarcation of space at the BTC, the visible and hidden inequalities of who is inside and who is outside the bank a question of who represents the white, fast, body of the male technology entrepreneur and who does not. From the spatial management of bodies of colour who travel to the BTC from former British colonies, to their

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precarious employment contracts, there is an attempt to mark these bodies as outside the boundaries of the bank, not quite Agile enough to remain one of the 'shiny app-y people' of the BTC for long.

If the entrepreneur is the phantasy at the middle of the bank, a mimic man of the *new world*, to paraphrase Bhabha (1994, emphasis mine), then the bank's mimicry of this points to a strategy of colonising staff and customers into a vision of the future as white entrepreneurial success - in the image of Google, Microsoft, Amazon and Apple, etc (the success of the Chinese firm Alibaba in disrupting financial markets bucks this trend, however Alibaba's male founder was treated as a white-washed simulator of Silicon Valley technology companies by senior leaders at the BTC: 'Jack did some inspirational things to open the Chinese market' – member of the Digital Apps team, 2014). There are also neo-colonial activities the bank engages in for its technology products to become realised – in particular the offshoring and outsourcing of technology development, testing and storage to developing countries. The entrepreneur as a brand image of the bank's future has no history in the colonial history of the bank itself, but can in fact be argued to be a continuation of the same regime. The hegemonic success of the 'great *white* sharks' – the name given to those large technology firms listed above by one senior manager who spoke with me in 2015 (emphasis mine), and their simulation by teams at the BTC hungry for the same success, or at least to avoid getting eaten, is an everyday experience of the colonization of the bank's brands on staff at the BTC.

We can see then, how new cultures of entrepreneurial innovation and work (such as 'Agile' and 'bank of the future') being championed at the BTC by site leaders and team managers, were all part of the *appification* of the bank and its brand as a sign, a signifier of the future. From what I could see and was hearing from accounts of staff at the BTC, it seemed the brands of the bank championed by the digital apps leader and CRES, were effectively colonising increasing spaces of the bank into this new future. As Zelizer has described it, brands are a form of social currency (1998), a reciprocal sign of value between the 'brander' and the 'branded', and in this case the former were the leaders at the BTC championing these 'start-up' cultures - from their aesthetic programmes to the entrepreneurial, white, male bodies of power they represented - and the latter were the rest of the staff at the BTC and the bank more widely, including those at the 'global hubs' in Lithuania and India (among others). Of

course, the leaders espousing the promise of these new brand messages were also branded, conscripted into the discourse of a brighter future for the bank if it simply allowed itself to become, effectively, a colony of Silicon Valley and its success in branding and creating apps. The branded metaphor may also describe the darker experiences for staff at the BTC who felt conscripted into the technology start-up brand while also suffering alienation from the realities of their work:

> 'They treat us like shit. They want us to be like Google but treat us like sweatshop workers.'

This extreme version of the dissonance of the bank's brands and the hidden embodied realities behind these images spoke strongly of the colonising forces described above, and although many staff did not share such a violent rejection of the 'bank of the future', those staff who were closest to the outsourcing and offshoring of work to create 'apps' and other technologies, and who experienced the inequalities hidden by such brands, were their most vociferous critics.

As the bank built itself as 'contactless', a set of disembodied services enabled by applications, the physical artefacts of the bank were disappearing into a brand, reflected in the strategy for closing retail branches and data centres in the UK by this bank (54 closing in 2017 with 100 earmarked for closure in 2016 - April 6, Reuters.com). 'Banks could end up as just ATMs in the wall', so said one technologist from the Mini-apps team, where I would spend 6 weeks following those staff on the frontline of this transformation of the bank from an embodied service administered and mediated by customer service agents on the high street, to 'self-service' transactions for customers to complete themselves on a smartphone app. In the pursuit of 'self-service' banking by all large UK banks in 2016, the social currency of the brand was becoming more valuable, perhaps the only means by which a bank could retain a relationship with customers and distinguish itself in the face of competition from 'great white sharks'. Traditionally safe and embodied banking practices, such as the bank customer visiting bank branches to deposit money, apply for a mortgage or send money to payees, were becoming transformed into downloadable apps and virtual, dis-embodied transactions. The intensified competition of the banking industry now meant there must be a good justification for any customer to choose to download a bank's app onto their smartphone, using this to complete their clicks and scrolls over any other number of banking apps available. This bank

needed brands which would repeatedly bring customers back, brands with their own agency (Suchman, 2007, p.11) in the hand of the smartphone holding customer, ones which would flow into their cultural imagination. The myth of a future for the bank where such appification of banking services solves its problems and is able to colonise the whole organization in the image of the 'great white sharks' is discussed and problematised next in relation to the experiences of those in the 'mini-apps team' at the BTC.

Mini-app to the future

In order to understand the appification happening at the BTC in practice, we consider the experience of the Mini-apps team. This small group of technical staff all sat along and across one large white desk in the middle of the first floor of Babbage House - five Service Analysts and their manager - as a steadfast flow of bodies, loud and quiet, quickly rushed by, passing through their workspace. The team was in the middle of the physical space of this building, and was also caught in the middle of a complex flow of 'build', 'fix' and 'live' modes of organising (Lury, 2004), as 'Mini-apps' were created, made ready for use by customers (who were other staff within the bank's global network of branches and data centres) and then made available for download on the bank's internal app store. This team handled the technical support of all services and technologies of the bank being gradually transformed into 'Mini-apps' to be used on the bank's internal operating system (called 'Fullserve'). Build teams would create new Mini-apps for banking services on Fullserve such as mortgages ('the mortgages mini-app'), which would then be passed on to this Mini-apps team to learn how to support technically. This meant the team would learn how to solve the issues that would arise for customers using a new mini-app once this was launched. A mini-app was then passed on again to another team where it would 'go live', once a pilot where a small number of customers had tried it out was completed and the mini-app could cope with the network traffic without breaking. Once a mini-app went live, customers who experienced problems and could not solve this via 'self service' in Fullserve – the preferred option for managers at the bank as this required no staff to help customers - would ring up a technical support line which would take them through to speak to someone in Lithuania (the 'L1' (level 1) support team), and this team would then reach out to the Mini-apps team at the BTC for specialist

technical help to solve the problem if they struggled to find a solution. The manager of the Mini-apps team explained it: 'Fullserve is like an iOS system, with the Mini-apps that go on it like apps for iOS'.

Apps have been described as 'new cultural platforms' (Goggin, 2011), having been generated into cultural discourse via the birth of Apple's first iteration of the iPhone in 2007 (2011, p.155). Here in the Mini-apps team at the BTC in 2016, we find the consumption of this culture of the app making up the bank's re-branding of itself - in the image of Apple, the original app-makers. The app (and the mini-app) can be described as a perfect flat surface, a gateway to new digital, contact-less and dematerialised futures, where embodied experience and history cannot exist. Goggin (2011, p.155) has called apps 'but a caricature of what might be possible—and indeed is required—in this historical phase of social transformation and cultural development under mobile mediation'. Organization at the BTC is being mediated via appification, a process that colonises all bodies into the flat image of the male technology entrepreneur, into the promise of the bank's future in its brands which see differences translated 'into a historical totality' (Bhabha, 1994), one that de-materialises and masks the labour that goes into making it up.

The Mini-apps team consisted of five Service Analysts specialising in different aspects of mini-app support, and their sarcastic and well-liked Manager, who had made the move over to lead this team from a background in Mainframe computing, because, in his words: 'I wanted more money and more stress.' Four of the Service Analysts from this team had started their careers in retail bank branches, but they had all left some years ago and sought jobs at the BTC. The threat of branch closures unless performance targets were met (some of these pressures I was told were the genesis of the 'PPI scandal' - or financial insurance mis-selling that all UK banks have been compensating customers for in recent years), and the embodied resistance to the bank's brand from customers had driven these staff to resign and apply for jobs at the BTC, removed from direct interactions with customers.

> 'One man came in and urinated on a chair, right there in the branch!…one man tried to hit me with his walking stick, shouting about useless bankers, pushing over leaflets…we got all sorts of crap' – Mini-apps Service Analyst, 2016.

Until this team had been created two years ago, those Service Analysts who had worked in bank branches were working in 'The Tower', as part of the L1 team, answering calls from the bank's internal customers on technical problems which ranged from desktop computers not turning on to computer programmes crashing halfway through a loan or mortgage application with a customer. The 'Service Desk' had welcomed me to observe and ask questions in 2014, however, when I had returned to the BTC in 2015, the team had vanished, with the vast majority of this so called 'purge' of approximately 100 staff having being made redundant, as the L1 function was off-shored to Lithuania, a lower cost location. The effects of this remained with the Mini-apps Service Analysts, who spoke bitterly about the treatment of their L1 team at The Tower by senior leadership:

> 'The boss there had no idea, his idea of improving the Service Desk was to get rid of more and more people, he didn't realise we had 150 years of service between us.'

Jobs were disappeared in the name of off-shoring 'cost-sensitive technology capabilities' for the benefit of the bank's bottom line, and, perhaps above all, in service to the battle for the bank's brand. As Klein (2000, p.3) has argued, for corporations to be successful in contemporary times, they must produce brands rather than products, and it is the corporation with the fewest bodies on the balance sheet, yet with the most powerful brands which will win the war of competition for customers.

The mini-apps team had been depleted of resources and was suffering the consequences of a removal of the most experienced and technical members of the team when I arrived: 'the team was split 18 months ago, most of our technical people were taken away, we never recovered' the Mini-apps Manager told me. Jobs 'taken away', highly specialised and skilled technology teams de-skilled as functions are split and offshored or outsourced, and increasing workloads as the bank's digital product range and app updates increased, were a direct effect of the bank's strategy to move more and more services to mini-apps, or to 'appify' itself. One of the Mini-apps Service Analysts tells me:

> 'L3 (highly skilled technicians who build apps) supposedly doesn't exist anymore, all offshored and outsourced. We [the L2, semi-technical, semi-service oriented Mini-apps team] have to support both projects and monthly app releases. It's constant'.

The Min-apps team quickly accepted me as part of their furniture – hot desks, various iPad screens to test the functionality of the latest mini-apps release, and an ethnographer. They considered my presence must have been for the purpose of 'monitoring how well we work', which I imagined was an assumption that stemmed from their years in the L1 Service Desk team, which saw a tightly controlled call centre culture monitor all their behaviours during a shift, from how long they were taking on each call to how long they spent on bathroom breaks.

The Mini-apps team Service Analysts spent much of their time dealing with 'incident queues' - lists of technical issues internal customers working in bank branches and data centres would ring up to report or record online, in Fullserve: 'incidents are caused by how incredibly badly the app has been built'…'since there's a high turnaround of staff in Lithuania, everything comes through to us'. One Service Analyst I get to know in the Mini-apps team types away with dexterity, fighting a queue of incidents and queries flowing into his screen from the Service Desk in Lithuania, those who had replaced the call centre workers in the Tower: 'The L1 team in Lithuania don't really know what they're doing…the simplest things…there's always a lack of knowledge and training'.

During my time with the Mini-apps team, I would hear many such comments regarding the L1 team, among others, in Lithuania, and there was a distinct difference in how members of the Mini-apps team based in 'global hubs' in developing countries were treated by the white British members of the team based at the BTC, and the formal rules of organization which applied to these groups also greatly differed. Sitting in between Rob and Sharron, two Service Analysts working the 'incident' and 'problem' queues, I would hear one afternoon how their covert holidays together had upset a sub-team technologist in Lithuania: 'When there are two people on holiday at the same time it's too much, I need time on these incidents, keeping up becomes too much on my own'. This complaint was ignored, and it was taken for granted that those staff in Lithuania the BTC Mini-apps team relied on would not indulge in long holidays or breaks, as this 'would cause too much disruption' to the various queues of incidents and problems to be dealt with. Jokes regarding the Lithuanian technologists were also common: 'He's what we might call slow. He thinks he's the best Service Analyst here too, when he's definitely bottom of the pile'. The lack of access to training and promotion was a barrier to Lithuanian team members improving technically to the level of their UK counterparts Simon

would tell me, and they 'did well considering' these constraints, in his assessment as their line manager. We may therefore point to both an explicit institutional racism in these encounters, as well as practical barriers which may have led to a poorer performance of Lithuanian staff compared to their British counterparts.

There were many kinds of closeness displayed by members of the BTC mini-apps team, such as shared histories (from working in branches and call centres to a commitment to serving 'real customers at the end of the line – that's what keeps us here', according to Rob) and strong ties of friendship that saw some members of the team attend football matches and family events together. However, exclusions from this closeness were also evident, with the single Indian member of the Mini-apps team at the BTC, Mansu, failing to join in the constant laid-back 'banter' and the comments that indicated inclusivity and closeness 'we all love you Simon' (Rob to the team's Manager). Mansu would change his seat each day, as the team was 'technically hot-desking, though we're not!' (Rob), with Mansu always taking the spare seat of whichever white member of the team was working from home that day (Mansu did not work from home during the time I was with this team as 'we need him he's too technical!' (Sharon)), and no other members of the team would change their seat. Georgina, a heavily pregnant, bubbly Service Analyst, invited me to her 'leaving doo' before going on maternity leave, a meal at a nearby restaurant in the countryside, and the warmth of the invitation felt unexpected and inclusive. However, the invitation was also tainted with what felt like the lightness of whiteness (Ahmed, 2014), as the event had been organised on a rare occasion when Mansu was absent from the long white table, and comments of exclusion followed: 'I hope Mansu doesn't come…he's a fussy eater, just order him chips if he does!' (Rob). Mansu indeed did not attend this ritual, perhaps aware his own body was seen and felt by his team as out of place there. In his quiet conscientiousness, Mansu seemed the only member of the Mini-apps team uncomfortable with my body beside him; I would shadow and watch as he silently approved and created technical fixes to app updates on his screen and his answers to my questions were short and shy.

After some hours sitting together, he brought me a plastic cup of water from the water fountain, a gesture of the gift that felt most inclusive of all. He then spoke for a short while about his journey to the UK from working at a call centre in a busy urban city in India, how life in the UK was very different and how beautiful he found the rural grounds of the technology

centre. His wife had also made the journey over to join him after some difficult months of separation as they waited for her visa to be approved, and Mansu was proud to be able to look after her and his children while his wife stayed at home 'we don't need her to work'. The 'trailing wives' phenomenon (Cooke, 2007) was fairly common for other Indian migrant workers to the BTC according to Mansu, as were anxious and lonely waits for visa approvals. The strength of any local diaspora or support network for the Indian contractors who came to work at the BTC did not become clear during this fieldwork, although from the interactions that were possible with staff who had re-located to the UK or who were here as temporary workers, spare time was a precious commodity, and the inability to park on site (unless a permanent member of staff) was problematic for after work socialising at the nearby pub, which was often frequented by other groups I spent time with at the BTC. As the bank re-located labour from urban India to the English countryside, we can see Mansu as one example of a 'racialised insider/outsider, a post-colonial subject constructed and marked by everyday practices' (Brah, 1996, p.9), which were created by the BTC and the shared colonial past of the bank and the British Empire.

Staff who made the journey from India faced the subtle discrimination of colonial power structures that still exist in contemporary organization, via the social exclusions of team socials or the lack of access to a permanent seat or even a car park space. We find the same mode of colonisation at play as we did in the bank's brand images through and after Empire; what Stoler has called 'racialised relations of allocations and appropriations' (2008). It has been argued that immigrants are likely to 'follow earlier patterns of movement, for example Indians moving to Britain, says more about the persistence of historical links forged under colonialism than it does about the economic calculation to move to the nearest available job' (Papastergiadis, 2018), and these historical ties were part of the reason Mansu had chosen to move to work for this bank in the UK 'I knew English from a young age…yes they teach it in almost all schools [in India]…so it made sense'. I was unable to draw out more of Mansu's own feelings towards his positionality at the BTC and his team, whether he would identify as a 'postcolonial subject' dealing with the legacies of Empire in his day to day experiences of work is not clear, and Mansu was most concerned with getting his 'head down' and completing as much work as possible to leave before 6pm and get back to his family. Bodies of difference in the 'global hubs' of India, Lithuania and other developing countries, those

often at the sharp end of creating the promise of the 'bank of the future', were treated as 'flexible resources' and 'global capabilities' (these were phrases commonly used at the BTC to describe these workers, particularly those sub-contracted to the bank, who were given little choice in the acceptance of precarious working contracts according to several junior managers I spoke to). The bank was utilising sub-contracted and re-located staff such as Mansu, many from former British colonies, to de-materialise itself into the 'bank of the future', into banking apps. All these inconvenient bodies were vanished behind the apps they helped create and support, and behind the brands these represented.

In listening to Mansu's story and reflecting on his treatment in the context of the Mini-apps team, helping the bank to transform its technology products into an internal form of apps, we may argue the bank is complicit in the reproduction of historical and social contracts from the era of British Empire, where foreign workers were attracted to work in the UK from former colonies, but who were then be subject to alienation and othering in their new workplaces, as we argue Mansu has been, and their labour subject to a racialised appropriation (Stoler, 2008) and 'white out' - a disappearance of their vision of the future – one of migration, hope and a better life, replaced instead with colonising images of the future, in this case the 'bank of the future'. This image of white, male entrepreneurial success, signified by the app, can be understood as a representation of a white ideal, the simulation of a 'great white shark', the selling of a de-racialised image of the future which obfuscates how this future is made and was made in the past by people of colour, by people who are subject to the experience of what we will go on to describe as *postcolony* in their everyday working lives (and who may also resist it, as we see from Darrell in chapter 3). The amount and intensity of work required to achieve the 'bank of the future' vision for complete appification of its technology functions, was also carried on the shoulders of many 'global hubs' teams in India and Lithuania, as well as directly affecting the workload of the Mini-apps team at the BTC. Moving 'to the cloud' was an essential step towards this future senior leaders at the BTC saw as 'catching up with the great whites' (Infrastructure Services Director, 2016), or simulating the organization of Silicon Valley technology firms.

Clouds and colonies

The vision for the BTC's future currently endorsed by the site leadership committee (mostly made up of middle-aged white men, with two or three middle aged white women also attending the meetings) involved 'cloud technology' replacing the hundreds of physical servers where the bank's current and legacy technologies lived and died. This 'New World' was also referred to by interlocutors in Infrastructure Services (those based in 'The Tower') and the Mini-apps team in Babbage House as 'aPaaS': 'application as a service'. The message which had been championed by senior leaders at the top of the bank for the last few years was for software to be moved to 'the cloud' (to aPaaS) and off 'clunky old servers' as a key strategy to secure the long-term future of the bank. This strategy was another aspect of the colonising regime of appification taking place at the BTC. The intensification of work has been a popular discourse in critical organization studies in recent years (Hassard, McCann and Morris, 2009; McCann, Morris and Hassard, 2008; McCann et al., 2013; Granter and McCann, 2015), and we can see an example of the acceleration of work so intimately tied to the appification of the BTC and the intensified work regimes for those staff building and supporting these apps in practice in the words of one technician who worked next to the Mini-apps team, recalling to me how his role had changed over the years in that:

 'I've been here since 2001 and I remember when we had 5 apps, now we have 1400!...I remember when one person would make a change to a system and it would take months not a day!'

This revolution in the number of apps and speed of processes the bank manages, ever increasing, was a significant concern to Simon, the Mini-apps team manager, who said of this strategy:

'aPaaS is my next battle, moving to aPaaS S means there will no longer be monthly releases, they could decide to make a drop at any time. At the moment there is one drop per month, if they miss this, then it has to be next month. At the moment we have physical boxes, 3 versions [of each mini-app] can go on each box, so this limits the amount of versions of the apps we can be asked for. But when we're on cloud, you could in theory have unlimited versions,

unlimited apps. As more apps are created and moved onto fullserve, we have to support these. This is my next battle.'

APaaS was imagined by those on the site executive committee as the solution to 'cost challenges' that hit the bank each year - challenging targets set for every team at the BTC by the most senior leaders (CEO, CIO, CFO, CTO) to save the bank money as competition and historical banking scandals drained the bank's share price and spending power. However, the assertion that the bank would save money by moving to 'the cloud' from physical servers ('We'll be able to finally close down our data centres' so said one senior manager to his team at The Tower) from trading physical hardware for virtual software, by appifying itself, began to look and sound increasingly like a fiction, or a fantasy, the longer I spent at the BTC.

> 'There are no certainties we will save money on licence costs by moving to cloud. It could even end up more expensive after a few years' (Simon, the Mini-apps team Manager).

The increased workload and inability to deal with the amount of 'problems' and 'incidents' produced by moving to the cloud and passed on to the Mini-apps team to deal with also placed serious doubt on this strategy according to Mini-apps analysts. The Middleware and Mainframe teams I spent time with in The Tower recounted similar misgivings about the promises of an aPaaS future, and how they worried about the power the bank was giving over those 'great white sharks', the big technology companies who would enable aPaaS to become a reality, and which senior leadership at the bank so admired and attempted to simulate. One Middleware Technician told me: 'the cloud will be run on Amazon in the future, that's the idea…we really shouldn't have any customer data on their platforms, we don't know if it's secure'.

More than just a means for the bank to save money, the migration of the bank's technologies to 'the cloud' certainly did see a simulation of those brands the bank fetishized; the challenger bank and the white sharks which in the collective imagination of this bank's senior leaders were without 'chunky old servers' and historic banking technologies to slow down their agile product development, apps and growth. The consequences of this simulation however, this de-materialisation of the bank from hardware to virtual software, failed to fit in with the agile,

seamless, problem-solving, imagined futures of appification, and the realities were in fact far more bureaucratic and reminiscent of the bank's more familiar, large, corporate complexities:

> 'it can take months for something to go through L1, L2, L3 as an incident and a problem…to close it.'

Each iterative version of the future, 1605, 1607, 1609, (all named versions of Mini-apps made live in 2016), took the bank back to the past, creating problems and incidents that slowed down any future of progress so much so that it came to a halt, a future in reverse: 'create a problem and send this for a fix, again!' (Sharon). This chasing the future was never over, and the attempt to appify, to colonise the organisation into the future desired by a few leaders at the top of the bank, was creating an impossibility of this future ever being achieved, as histories of old versions of apps destroyed the promise of the updated versions for download. 'Problems' were never solved, and the bank would never be able to achieve the myth promised in its 'bank of the future' branding. For the Mini-apps team, the bank's regime of 'the appification of everything' (Kosner, 2012), or what we could call here *Mini-appification*, meant that as iterations of mini-apps and updates to mini-apps increased, so too did the 'problems' and 'incidents' this small support team at the BTC and their staff in Lithuania had to deal with. The more progress was made, the faster this was slowed down, the more the Mini-apps team had to work to keep up with each new version of the future they were creating:

> '1608 cancels 1605, 1609 won't be approved. The work-around for 1605 will be in the 1607 tracker…but a regulatory change will trump everything.' (Rob).

Time was therefore also colonised by the image of the app, as the future promised by the app and the ways it had been branded by the bank, literally, never materialised.

As Daniel Miller has described the cultural critique of branding as too involved with static surfaces with no bodies, 'rather than refiguring, dominant forms of commodity fetishism' (1998, p.9), and attending to the 'mundane sensual and material qualities' of embodied things (ibid), in the same way, leaders at the bank and the BTC may also be understood to ascribe high value to brands that vanish the bodies which make them up. What is meant by this is the promotion and internalisation of brand images such as 'the bank of the future', with language such as 'the app is the future' ubiquitous in the spaces of the BTC, and the minimisation or

exclusion of discourse concerned with the consequences of this for those who create this future; those who will lose their jobs and those jobs which will be created in low cost locations, or filled by workers from former British colonies on precarious employment contracts. It was also common to hear comments from managers at the BTC such as 'data centres will be an inevitability, we'll just move them from the UK to India', or 'MSPs (third party service providers) will plug the gap when we're going through another wave of redundancies'. These were stark realities for one call centre team at the BTC (which we will discuss in more detail in chapter 4), who were under existential threat from the profligacy of these new futures (the 'new world') and the power of this branding on managers at the top of the bank making strategic decisions about investment and 'collateral damage' (as the Head of App Hosting called those who lost theor jobs due to the bank's strategies on digital change). Therefore, we find at the BTC a propagation of powerful images of the future with no generative qualities, history or reflection of the real, and racialised, neo-colonial labour processes that go into creating the bank's branded products (in the case explored in this chapter, Mini-apps). The 'bank of the future' therefore has no roots in (or routes to) either the bank's colonial past, or back to the staff still struggling under the weight of a dis-embodied brand and the strategy of appification, that de-materialises the bank and disappears de-skilled jobs to lower cost global locations. As workers such as the Mini-Apps team's only Indian programmer join the BTC, resettling families across the world in search of a 'better life' and in service of the bank's drive to mini-appification, there is no trace of his struggle or story in the technologies he is critical in creating, no sense of the postcolony in the flat, shiny surface of the mini-app and it's branding. Brand now is the identity of the organization itself (Suchman, 2007, p.8), but the brands we find at the BTC act as erasers of history as much as signifiers of the future. 'It's got nothing to do with me' one Lithuanian woman, working in the Mainframe team at the BTC, describes the bank's promotional materials for UK customers in 2016: 'Most people don't even know (the bank's brand name) here'. There is no attempt in the branding to reach out to the realities of staff (or even customers) in developing countries, rather the image of the 'GO-to bank' (internal marketing newsletter, 2014) is created and disseminated by and for a Western, specifically UK, white demographic. The brands reflecting this may be argued to act as totalising spaces where histories do not exist and all the labour and experience that makes up the bank's technologies disappears into the app's dis-embodied, de-materialised surface. We may call these spaces of the BTC's brands ones of

'Imperial ruination' (Stoler, 2008), that is, a kind of domination that destroys that which is other to itself, which sets about colonising via an organised set of images and visions of the future. We will discuss in chapter 4 the implications of this in more detail, but it must be said here that this practice of promoting colonising brands in this post-colonial organization was important, and made up what Mbembe has called postcolony, and what this thesis argues is a temporality of postcolony.

Mbembe has discussed the problematic history of anthropology for having represented other worlds in a Western conception of time since the nineteenth century, and which, as a discipline, continues with 'the evolutionist prejudice and belief in the idea of progress', a colonial idea of the future and the othering of non-Western cultures which remains intact (2002, p.254). This colonial legacy is one ethnographic work in contemporary organizations must be actively aware of, in order for ethnography to be more than 'applied colonialism' in Talal Asad's words (1973), and de-colonial scholars of anthropology such as Zoe Todd have written about the discipline of anthropology today remaining 'a hostile and exclusive space' for non-white and indigenous peoples (2018). Work in organization studies on temporality has also identified that progress assumes the role of 'an attempt to colonize the future, to draw the unforeseeable back into tangible realities, in which one can invest and on which one can bank, very much in the spirit of stockmarket "futures"' (Jameson, 2005, p.228). Here time is imagined in very much the same way as leaders at the BTC conceived of it, as a certainty of the de-materialisation of banking and the future. Hibbert et al. have also found that organizational research is structured by preconceptions of time (2014), and a 'whole system of legitimising beliefs and practices' has been argued to make up the ideology of the future (Berg Johansen, 2018, p.188) for corporations, as they seek accelerated markets, profits and (real and metaphorical) banking services. Mbembe adds to this line of argument by implicating the responsibility that individuals living under such temporalities must take for upholding them: 'People themselves are cast as human capital and must accordingly tend to their own present and future value' (2016, p.40). In this frame of reference, neoliberalism has become the material experience of the everyday (Srnicek and Williams, 2015), and the 'invisible barrier' of 'capitalist realism' (Fisher, 2009), that bounds all thought, action and agency by the limited temporality of 21st century, accelerated capital. We may interpret this temporality as intensely linked with the constant re-invention of colonising regimes of

organization and even colonised selves, as the violence of valuing bodies according to images of appified, capitalist futures are internalised: 'the colonized person is a living, talking, conscious, active individual whose identity arises from violation, erasure and self-rewriting' (Mbembe, 2008, JWTC blog).

All this draws a tracing of that mythical, universal figure of the West, of Whiteness and its opposite, Blackness. For Mbembe, these are polarisations which constitute one another: what structures Western discourse of Africa and African-ness, and Western discourse about its own futures, are both traced in these fictions of the time of Western capitalism and that of racialized otherness: 'in contrast to reason in the West, myth and fable are seen as what, in such societies, denote order and time.' (2001, p.4). There is a 'time without motion' as O'Halloran describes it, in the conceptions of time we find in Western organizations and organizational research, and this static view of the future as linear time feeding accelerated production (Johansen and de Cock, 2018, p.188) creates, paradoxically, an eternal return to the past in postcolony, where the future does not exist (2016). This is once again, the same phenomenon we found taking place in the constant creation of 'problems' by new app iterations in the Mini-apps team in chapter 2, and the failure of Agile 'sprints' in chapter 3 – futures which fail to materialise.

Final Thoughts

What we have learned in this chapter is that the power of the brand of 'the bank of the future' as a colonising force in this organization cannot be underestimated. As one of the Mini-apps Service Analysts confesses after we catch up several months after I had spent time with the team: '(the transition to Mini-apps) was just untenable. We were stitched up really'. We have also discussed how images from contemporary popular culture have infiltrated organization (Rehn, 2008) at the BTC, via brand images representing the Silicon Valley technology entrepreneur, and bank as a global organization of 'Stewardship', which can be interpreted as a reflection of its colonial history as the 'Colonial Bank'. We have also seen how the practices of attracting labour from former British colonies, and the institutional racism that waits for such workers in the UK, continues at the BTC today. In the next chapter the work methodology of Agile at the BTC will be explored, where the image of the white, male

technology entrepreneur was enacted in practices of work in a more pronounced way. What I came to understand to be a *postcolony* of work, time, space and experience at the BTC will also be explicated in chapter 2.

Figure 2: Maps of the Colonial Bank: Marketing images demonstrating the attitudes of this bank to British colonies where the 'Colonial Bank', as it was known during the time of British Empire, had a strong market presence.

Figure 3: The headless spread eagle: Image of an anti-apartheid banner, showing this bank's logo from the 1980s being split by a lightning bolt with a caption: 'Don't bank on apartheid!' Such attacks on the bank's brand contributed to its withdrawal from the South African banking market and other investment interests in the country.

Figure 4: *Cloud of the future: A pop up poster on the first floor of the Tower advertising 'aPaaS':
the transformation at the BTC from physical servers to 'the cloud'.*

Figure 5: App to the future: A framed poster of a car similar to that from the film 'Back to the Future', with the slogan 'App to the Future'. The poster is signed by the former bank CEO, who had the idea to create the bank's first payment app. Iterations of future apps and Mini-apps would bring the bank forward to the past as 'problems' that outnumbered technical solutions apps pertained to be solving. This prophetic poster hung in the ground floor of Babbage House.

Figure 6: *App magnets: Decorative magnets attach to a magnetic wall on the ground floor of Babbage House. The magnetic board and letters were introduced as part of a refurbishment to the building by CRES after 2010. Someone has spelt out the word 'App'.*
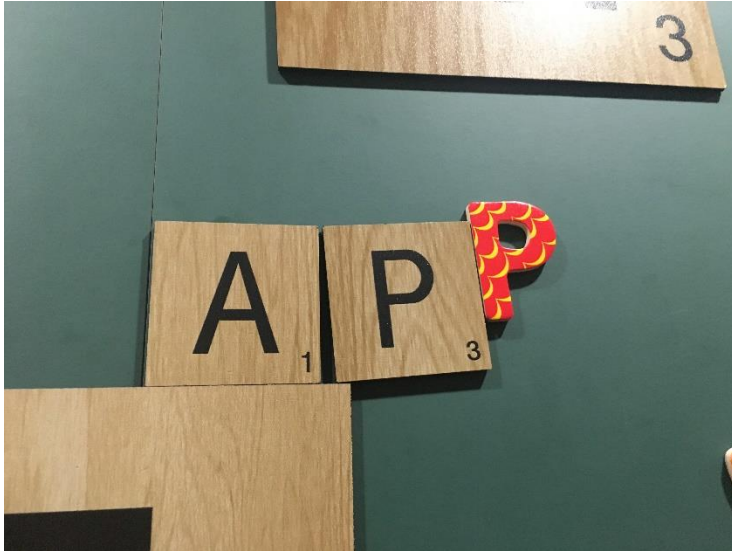
Figure 7: Tomorrow's bank wall mural: A large wall mural opposite the Mini-apps team on the first floor of Babbage House. The slogan 'Building Tomorrow's Bank' is prominent, and cartoon images of young men and women taking money from an ATM and making contactless payments from a phone, watch and flying car. We also see a cyborgian figure taking payment at a café/restaurant.

Figure 8: *Stewardship in action: A poster found in the women's toilets of the first floor of The Tower. Part of the 'Make a Difference' campaign, which ran throughout the bank, encouraging bank employees to 'give their time' to charity causes. The image on the poster shows a white male bank employee in a blue shirt sitting with a group of Indian men, explaining something with his hands.*
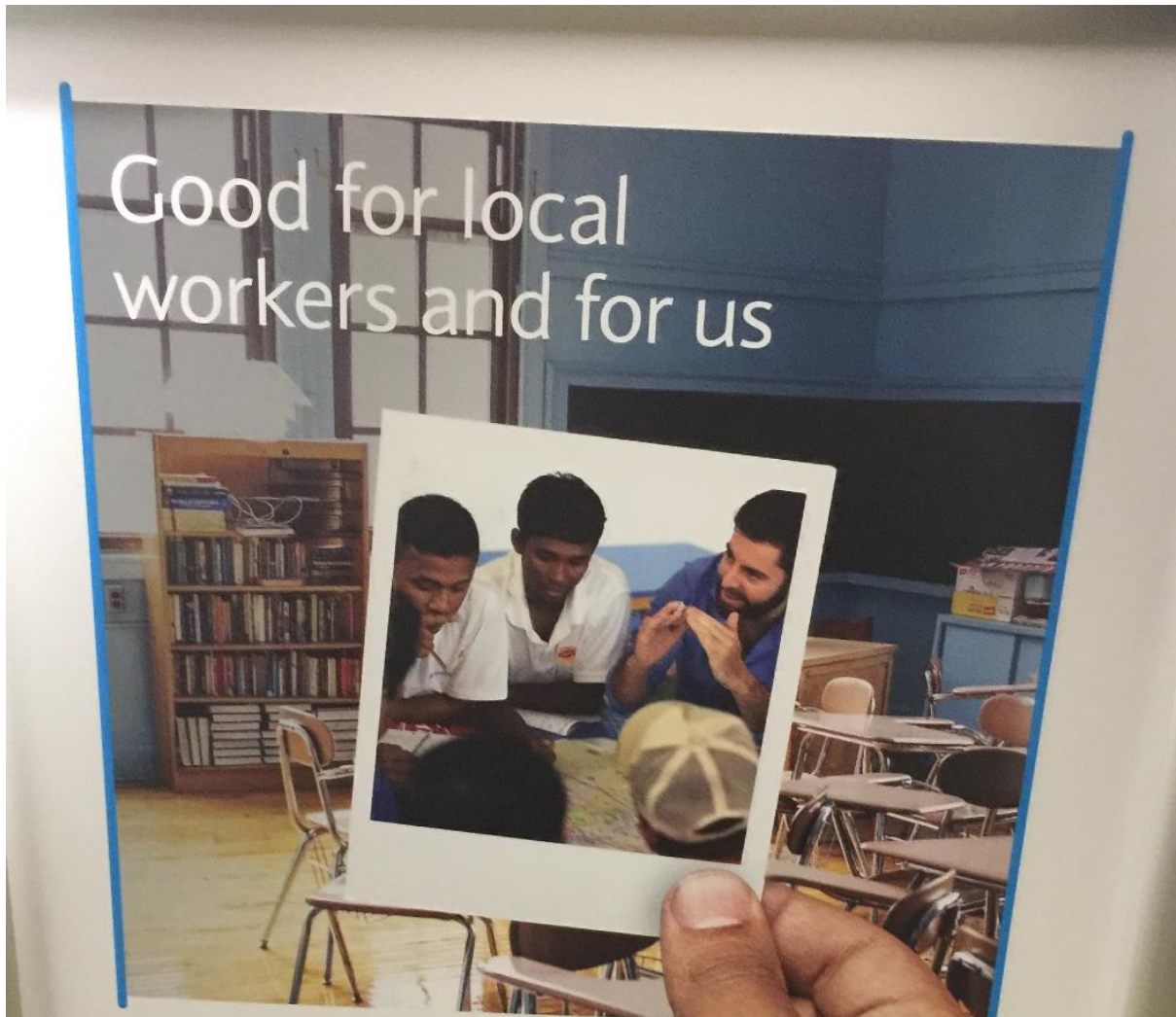
Figure 9: App by numbers: Numbers and graphs depicting the successes of the bank's flagship payments app, framed on a wall on the ground floor of Babbage House. This app is promoted at the BTC as an important part of the bank's brand, an app which began the digital future of the bank.

Figure 10: *Error message: An error message that pops up on the screen of one Service Analyst in the Mini-apps team. Technical functionality that the Analyst requires is 'not available yet' and 'will be delivered in a future release'. We know from the ethnographic realities of spending time with this team that this future is unlikely to come true.*
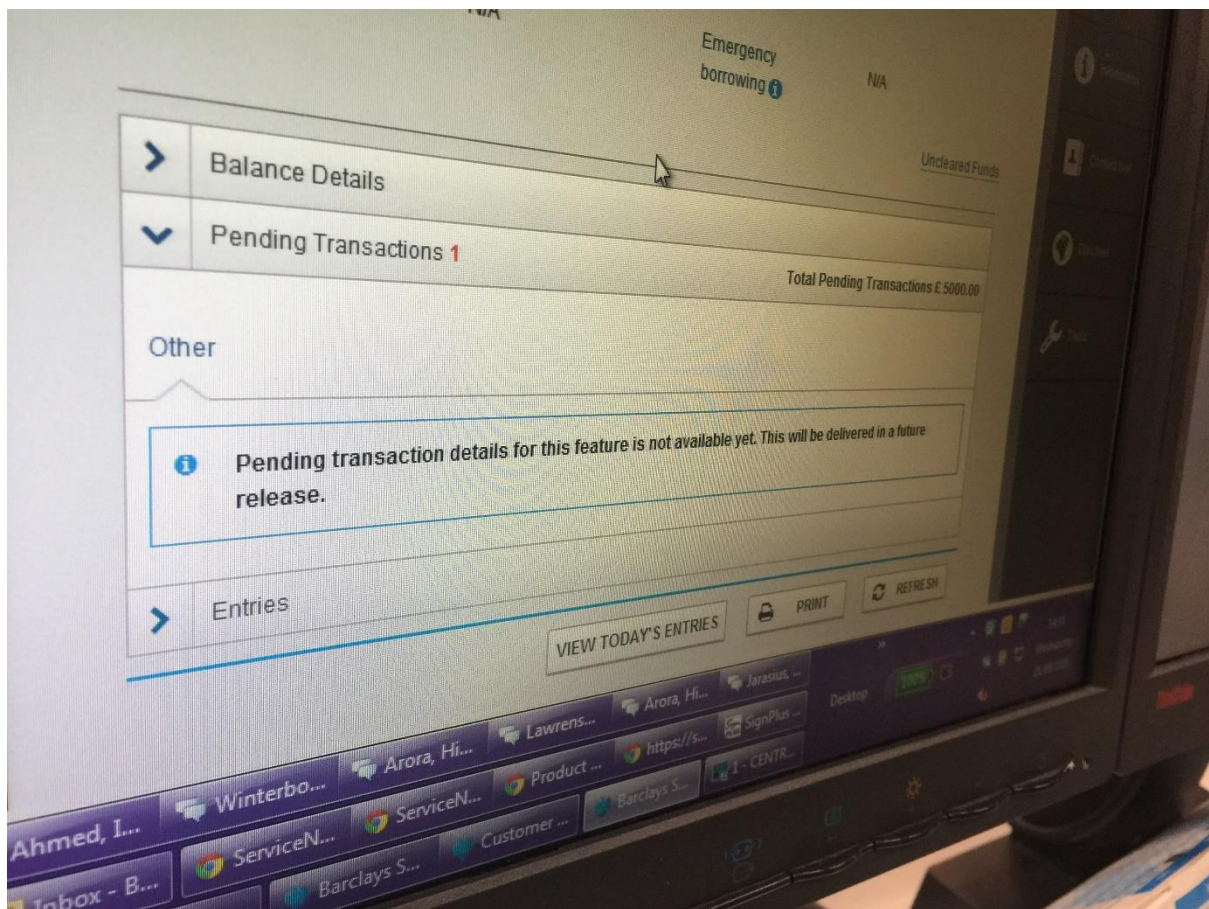
Figure 11: Accelerated dancing: An example from the bank's intranet showing how the bank values start-up cultures of the entrepreneur.

Taking flight: Cutover one year on
22 Sep 2016

Cutover helps banks choreograph their most intricate moves. One year after graduating from the ███████ Accelerator, powered by Techstars,* founder Ky Nichol explains how ███████ has helped the fintech start-up leap onto a bigger stage.

Figure 12: App-ing over the cracks: A large image painted onto a wall on the ground floor of Babbage House. Social media icons and the words 'innovate' and 'collaborate' surround a large hole in the middle of the image, an opening into cloud and sky. The large word 'Transform' dominates the artwork, representing the transformation from the colonial terms of the 'Old World' of 'chunky old servers', to the 'New World' of 'the cloud'.

Chapter 3

Agile and postcolony: welcome to the CoLab

In this chapter the colonising regimes of organising represented in the brand images of this bank, discussed in the previous chapter, will be traced and unpacked via the work of one team at the BTC called the 'cheque imaging project' (CIP), and the work methodology 'Agile', used to complete CIP work in a building at the BTC called the CoLab. This chapter will build on the previous arguments in chapter 2 regarding the appification of the bank and the image of the white, male, technology entrepreneur being internalised in the brands and working practices found at the BTC. This chapter focuses on the neo-colonial inequalities in space and time experienced by staff from outside the UK working in Agile at the CoLab.

This chapter aims to contribute to critical management perspectives on project management (Highsmith and Cockburn, 2001; Turk, France and Rump, 2005; Kiely, Kiely and Nolan, 2017) and Agile work (Hodgson and Briand, 2013), as well as temporality in organization (Hassard, 1990, 1991, 1996; Thrift, 2004; Cunliffe et al., 2004; Halford and Leonard, 2005; Hoy, 2009; Gasparin and Neyland, 2017; Johansen and De Cock, 2017; Johnsen, Johansen and Toyoki, 2018). This will be achieved via elucidating a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony*, emerging from ethnographic fieldwork in the CoLab. The field as postcolony, which was alluded to in chapter 1, will be described as how Agile at the BTC was found to be a particular regime of work that colonises bodies and spaces into the image of the white male technology entrepreneur, but which also inspires acceptance, simulation as well as cynicism, resistance, and complicity at the BTC. It is argued that Agile working practices and the ideology behind Agile work at the BTC contributes to a colonised materiality or set of embodied relations that reinforces historical colonial inequalities and difference among bodies in the CoLab. Agile working at the BTC creates bodies colonised into material difference via its *de-racialisation* – reinforcing historic power structures along lines of race and nationality in particular. This chapter will describe ethnographic encounters at the CoLab, those on the 'Cheque Imaging Project', to explain these arguments. Staff in the CoLab working on the cheque imaging project (CIP) were found to be accorded different levels of material privilege and space, along

with associated inequalities when accessing liminal spaces such as the car park, translated here into stories of postcolony at the CoLab.

Agile goes mainstream

Project management literatures have in recent years seen a spike in debates concerning contemporary work methodologies and practices known as 'Agile' (Conforto et al 2014; Abrahammson, Conboy and Wang, 2009; Highsmith, 2002, 2009), with a particular focus on case studies in the technology industries (Conforto and Amaral, 2016; Schwalbe, 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Software programming and digital engineering in particular have been fields where studies into Agile have become mainstream, along with research into the organizational effectiveness of agile working (Highsmith and Cockburn, 2001; Turk, France and Rump, 2005; Kiely, Kiely and Nolan, 2017). There has been little work on Agile team working from within CMS, however Hodgson and Briand (2013) have made an important contribution to understanding Agile team working from a critical perspective, de-constructing Agile work as a post-bureaucratic management technique that promises autonomy and emancipation for those working in Agile, yet delivers traditional hierarchical control within an illusion of freedom. Work exploring the consequences of organizational praxis that is 'post-bureaucratic', or aims to do away with the traditional artefacts and practices of bureaucracy such as management hierarchies and rule-based job roles in response to 'a range of pressures commonly associated with globalization and technological advance' (Johnson et al., 2009), has been an area of interest for critical management and organization scholars for some time (Grey and Garston, 2001; Alvesson and Thompson, 2004; Casey, 2004; Courpasson and Clegg, 2006). Agile can be understood as a specific type of post-bureaucratic work regime that creates a hyper-structured and hyper-accelerated experience of time in the Agile workplace. The embodied, temporal and spatial work that Agile methodologies create for those working in Agile teams is not currently well understood by scholars of management and organization – a considerable gap in the literature exists which this chapter aims to contribute to fleshing out, in order to make a contribution to debates concerning Agile in business, management and organisation studies, from a post-colonial perspective.

The academic interest in Agile has coincided with Agile work being adopted by numerous organizations over recent years, as the rise of the 'project based economy' (Kovách and Kučerova, 2009), means managing time-limited work projects has become a necessary concern for organizations. These include many of the major banks in the UK, who utilise Agile working in order to build their technology products, as well as public organizations such as the NHS, which posts a helpful definition of Agile on its website: 'Agile working is a way of working in which an organization empowers its people to work when, where and how they choose, with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints' (nhsemployers.org).

This definition is a good starting point for understanding how Agile was envisioned and internalised as a way of working at the BTC from 2014-2016. From our previous discussion on the power of the start-up culture of fast, iterative working at the BTC, where banking products were 'appified', (destined to become apps) in order for customers to complete more banking functions themselves via their smartphones, Agile can be understood as a way senior leaders at the BTC aimed to enable and realise this reality.

Agile, this 'flexible and collaborative' methodology, was the predominant way of working at specific spaces at the BTC, in particular, one building named the 'CoLab' (short for 'collaboration'). The gatekeepers of this ethnography were keen for me to experience the new and exciting space of the CoLab and write about it in my next report. The CoLab was a building newly renovated and opened in 2015, where technology teams working on projects deemed important to the bank could apply to spend 90 days, working 'Agilely' and 'collaboratively' until the ticking timer attached to a large whiteboard where each team was seated counted down to zero. The CoLab was a high profile opening for the BTC senior leadership team (the same staff who made up the site leadership committee), as it represented a step towards the future the bank had been branding itself as over the past few years; what we have described in the previous chapter as de-materialised, 'digital', 'transformative', and led by 'shiny app-y people' (internal marketing magazine, autumn 2014). For the senior leadership team, the future of the bank was inextricably bound up with Agile working. Technology software for mortgages, payments, corporate banking and nearly all other technologically-enabled banking services were now increasingly being created by small 'self-governing teams' in 'sprints' of approximately 4 weeks. Agile workers were encouraged to 'push themselves', to be 'self-motivated' and 'self-directed' (all quotes from

managers in the CoLab), to keep up with a competitive market for banking technology where success or failure was measured by the use and popularity of apps: 'have you seen our ratings on the app store? It's not good. Compare us to some of the others (competitor banks)…we're behind the game, we need to catch up' (quote from one senior manager in the Digital Apps team). The CoLab was a building which the senior leadership team were keen to show mirrored the flexible work spaces and new project management methodologies being implemented at the London head office too, a positive reflection on their management of this 'campus site' in the Northern countryside: 'Our future is fast and collaborative…we're proud to welcome the CoLab, we're making history here!' said the leader of the Digital Apps team at the BTC (whom we met in chapter 1), at this building's opening. The newness and privilege of this space at the BTC would create a dissonance for me, when I would see the neo-colonial practices evident in the language of Agile, its hiring and firing policy, and in how bodies of different groups would occupy the space of the CoLab. The following sections will unpack these 'Agile tensions', or colonial legacies and implications of the Agile work methodology at the BTC.

The gatekeepers for this ethnography had evolved from Rupert and Angela, to Angela and Kitty; Kitty was a very different figure indeed to Rupert, who had taken to avoiding me in my final months at the BTC. Kitty was interested to meet and animatedly talk to me as often as possible, and to talk about the CRES re-branding exercises that represented the bank's shiny, app-y new future. Kitty, under Angela's direction, subtly shifted the focus of the data the ethnographic reports should be capturing for the rest of my time on site to recording the physical spaces of each technology team: how they differed, the impact space and aesthetics had on how teams behaved, the 'cultural differences' between technology teams situated in different spaces, the problems I found with teams when working in these spaces (particularly between Agile and 'non Agile' teams) and how these problems might be improved by changing spaces. This change meant a 're-furb' that would encompass among other things traditional desk chairs and office cubicles or long desk rows being replaced with felt-patterned break-out furniture, fun branded objects such as flying pigs hanging from the ceiling (see *Figure 20*) and trendy vivid wall paints. These would also be accompanied with a drive towards Agile working in most cases. These were the signifiers of progress towards the bank's brand goals of appification – 'the bank of the future'. Kitty was excited to know more about the work

that was being done in the CoLab in Agile: 'it's such an amazing space, teams are lucky if they get chosen [to work here].'

Welcome to the CoLab

The ways that staff were working and moving in the space of the CoLab felt decidedly different to other buildings at the BTC, which still retained the sense of huge corporate office spaces, despite the various area refurbishments by CRES. In the CoLab, a myriad of breakout areas of bright natural wood and glass and high surfaces and stools for bodies to precariously perch on speckled every corner of the open plan space (see *Figure 19* for a detailed layout of the CoLab). The bright light here was reminiscent of Ikea shopping trips as a child, or of retro-fitted hotel rooms trying to be both modern and nostalgic – in fact one member of the management committee of the BTC even suggested at his monthly area meeting: 'rooms in the CoLab could be turned into hotel rooms' as an extra money spinner for the site. Rows of attractive, exotic plants in a small garden framed the glass automatic doors of the CoLab, where smells of new wood and complimentary coffee greeted me as I entered through the neat security gate. This was a space of privilege and success at the BTC, and those who made it in here were seen as the chosen few by workers across the rest of the site. Work completed in the CoLab was an important reflection of the bank's new app-driven priorities, and the teams in here all worked 'in Agile'. A screen on the wall as one entered showed clips of the bank's most innovative projects, technology award ceremonies and public PR campaigns. In the middle of the CoLab, a whirl of new carpet in various shades of green with modernist geometric shapes, a minimalist grey felt sofa, and the white words 'ALWAYS LEAN', 'LIVE AGILE', 'BE THE CHANGE', on a black sign directly faced incomers to this brave new world. A bright new future of 'faster growth and iterations [of technology]', according to one CIP Technical Manager, was the change Agile and the CoLab represented to many stakeholders at the bank.

Addy's Agile

Let us first meet one of the 'evangelisers of Agile' (in her own words) – Addy the 'Agile Coach'. Addy worked almost exclusively in the CoLab. In an early interview, which Kitty had eagerly

arranged for me, Addy and I sat down at one of the CoLab's break-out spaces and Addy drew attractively symmetrical diagrams to help explain the 'Agile difference' (see *Figure 13* and *Figure 14*). These neat circles led to straight arrows finding neat boxes to represent how the work of Agile teams was carried out. Addy explained the 'product backlog' was a virtual to-do list of tasks that each team working in Agile had to 'pick up' activities from each day, moving these through the 'JIRA Kanban board' (JIRA being the name of this virtual software) as the tasks moved from 'in progress' to 'complete' (or 'blocked' if they could not be completed). I would watch Addy sitting alone during the weeks I spent in the CoLab, no team or colleagues to share her work or space with; she was physically isolated from and resented by many who did not wish for their work lives to be structured by Agile. Addy's role represented the future of promise and progress of the colonising regime of appification for the BTC, with Addy asked to give many talks on Agile to various teams and high profile visitors, and the bank attempting to recruit Agile coaches for each project team in the CoLab to ensure they completed their tasks in the 'right Agile' way, though demand for coaches was outstripping supply. However, many staff at the BTC were unhappy at being forced to work in Agile: 'To be blatant, the drive to Agile fluency level 2 for example – it's all pegged to the bonus pots of those at the top – that's why they were so upset when they failed to reach a fluency level they wanted.' A cynical Business Analyst tells me this as he struggles to convert his working practices to those short sprints stipulated in Agile – with each fluency level representing a faster project team who can complete Agile projects more quickly. Many would take their frustration at having to work in Agile out on Addy, bemoaning Agile and her role to her over the phone, in person or when she wasn't around. Addy had no permanent place to stay in the CoLab, she would often sit at a long white desk in the middle of the space, close to the entrance where those entering the CoLab were faced with its branded signs of visionary promises. 'INNOVATION, COLLABORATION', a sign on the wall read close to Addy's solitary figure, in the style of the moving shutters of old station announcements, black and white letters rendered a static monument to speed and movement. Addy spends much of her time alone at this table, working at a Macbook, or on an iPhone attempting to smilingly calm annoyed project managers whose teams are working in Agile and are having problems, or she would give training and advice sessions to different teams in the CoLab. One of the phrases Addy drew for me during our first interview, 'Servant Leadership' (see *Figure 13*), seems to come to life in the dislocation and isolation of her own position as an Agile Coach, as I watch her over

several weeks, doing her best to serve the rules (and rule) of Agile at the BTC. She promises to do everything she can to 'smooth the Agile journey' on one call, before ringing off and sighing to herself.

Addy tells me that I should 'check out the Agile Manifesto online', to understand how and why the idea of Agile working started.

The Agile Manifesto document I find talks about the beginnings of this new 'methodology' for doing software development. It all started with the 'Agile-ites' – a group of corporate executives who gathered together at a ski resort in the mountains of Utah to 'ski, relax, try to find common ground…and eat'. One day in the late 1990s, this group of like-minded success stories of the new capitalism (Sennett, 2006) decided to take the fast, iterative working practices some technology companies had begun to adopt seriously, and believed it was time to draft a manifesto to tell the world about their shared vision for organisations to adopt this method in practice. Agile's genesis is then clearly tied to chief executives and chief technologists at the very top of large American corporations, whose aims during the dot.com boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s were (and still are) to manifest the technologies of the future that would bring most competitive advantage, profit, public acclaim and market share.

Agile aims to re-distribute power relations from the traditions of the assembly line or the discretion of the corporate manager, according to the manifesto, and into the virtual (and de-materialised) flows of virtual task management systems (such as JIRA at the BTC).

Addy explained to me that 'Scrum' was an important part of Agile teamworking: 'Scrum is borrowed from Toyota, from manufacturing, and it's like making a cake…you put the variables in and you get the results'. As Hodgson and Briand have noted from their study of game developers working in Agile, 'the persistence of power relations was evident in the actual operation of various elements of Scrum' (2013, p.319). I would find that a traditional power and control relationship between those teams in the CoLab woring in Agile and their 'Scrum-Masters', was evidence of this too, despite Agile coaches constantly re-iterating to feature factory teams in the CoLab that the disappearance of hierarchy was essential to Agile work, that Agile ensures that: 'Traditional leadership hierarchies are no longer applicable'.

We find the same organizational paradox in the Agile manifesto's insistence that each Agile 'sprint' should last for a maximum of 30 days, and that every technology 'product' or 'iteration' must be ready to leave developers and testers after that time has elapsed, ready for its life with the app-savvy customer. This is fundamentally a how-to guide for classic bureaucratic control and management of staff. The (Taylorist) principles implicit in the manifesto I found as a static web page online, and as spoken about by Addy the Agile coach at the CoLab, are as functionalist as any management model from the industrial revolution; the factory assembly line reimagined with the lexicon of Japanese management practices (virtual 'kanban boards' such as 'JIRA', used at the BTC). On the other hand we may view Agile technologies as those tasked with ensuring those in Agile teams are subject to the Foucauldian discipline of the classroom (1975) - visible in the power apparatus of lines of coloured post-it notes some in the CoLab used to track the status and progress of their technology projects, or the way Agile teams were seated in lines next to one another, all leaving for their lunch break at the same time and not leaving the CoLab during working hours for any other reason. Technologies of control such as the Agile JIRA system were a means for each task and time period of the feature factory to be tracked and traced, as well as giving global teams complete transparency as to what their counterparts in other countries were doing at any given moment; in Burrell's words, 'the Panopticon has been updated by computer networking and 'computer architecture' (1988, p.233).

The 'Agile Manifesto' is frozen in the time of its making - the turn of the millennium and dot com boom, and what is left out of the declarations that Agile is 'about people, not resources', (Addy's words), or 'is about the mushy stuff of values and culture' (agilemanifesto.org/history.html), are the histories of colonial oppression and exploitation that have enabled these working practices, technologies and ideological futures to be made up in the first place. There are long and violent histories of organised subjugation and control over bodies of difference that are relevant to trace here – and whose legacies we find in the treatment of the CoLab Agile teams in 2016 – many of whom are from former British colonies. Along with characteristics of traditional Taylorism evident in the Agile Manifesto and practices in the CoLab, there were also histories and legacies buried within Agile, and evident in its contemporary practice at the CoLab, that were distinctly neo-colonial, colonising, and difficult to come to terms with, which we shall explore later in this chapter.

During our interview, Addy smiled animatedly and made jokes as she explained the overview of Agile and answered questions on some of its intricacies. 'I went for Agile training in the States, it was amazing! We coaches train for several weeks before we come to teach Agile to others'. Her Americanised Indian accent and easy confidence seemed to demarcate the same privilege as the CoLab itself, speaking of business education and new money as ways to 'create innovation', as Addy put it, to change the world. 'Other banks using Agile, they've cracked it…the market is changing with Apple Pay and these new payments systems…we have to embrace change.' Addy talked about Agile as a regime of competitive advantage, required to keep up with an uncertain and fast world of upgraded software versions and customer expectations. Her privilege and isolation at the BTC were mutually reinforcing; as Agile coaches became more in-demand and looked to by the bank's senior leadership to solve problems of technology 'blockers', and as Agile proliferated to an increasing number of BTC teams, Addy became increasingly resented at the BTC. Addy was undeterred, believing in the potential of Agile to change lives: 'In an August 2015 paper, 87% of 150 people surveyed said their work-life had improved after Agile…but many also felt a lot of conflict' Addy recounted to me earnestly. These 'Agile tensions', as Addy put it, were a theme Addy reported seeing first-hand in the CoLab, and would come to define the time I spent in this space and with one team who had recently moved into this precariously privileged place.

CIP world

What is it like to work in an Agile team? To answer this question we consider the example of the 'Cheque Imaging Project' (CIP); The CIP had recently moved into the CoLab at the time of the above interview with Addy, and over the course of the next few weeks I became immersed in the CIP project teams, shadowing and interviewing those responsible for project managing, developing, testing, scrum-mastering and many other functions of CIP work. These included permanent BTC staff, external consultants, and contract technologists from overseas who were attempting to build a new world of digital cheques for the UK banking industry. This section will begin to unpack Agile as a colonising regime of organization, an extension of that seen in chapter 2 where brands at the BTC conscript staff into an 'appified' vision of the future, with Agile an extension of this, with deeply colonial roots.

The CIP was a multi-million pound project to create the technical and customer facing digital infrastructure to make it possible to replace paper cheques in the UK with digital images of cheques, which rather than being brought physically into bank branches and taking 5 working days to clear, could instead be sent to customer bank accounts by customers themselves uploading a digital image to their smartphone (taking a photo of a paper cheque), and processed into digital money in customer accounts in as little as 24 hours. Those at the top of the bank hierarchy in London who had given the go-ahead to the CIP, were, according to staff on the CIP in the CoLab, convinced this would showcase the technical capabilities of the bank and lead the UK banking industry in creating cheque clearing technology based on images, advantageous for this bank with its first mover advantage in designing the technical architecture to support this. Another reason for the CIP discussed by several managers and technologists who had worked on cheque technology for many years was the assumption that 'the future is digital' and paper cheques would soon 'die out', along with the premise that cheque imaging would 'take the white vans off the road' (the transport used to carry paper cheques to data clearing centres – seen as very old fashioned and prime candidates for redundancy by senior leaders at the BTC). The idea of the CIP then was simple but the task monumental; many decades of existing inter-bank cheque clearing infrastructure and procedures that enabled all UK banks to clear cheques between one another was now required to be re-worked, with significant financial, legal, political and embodied implications for those tasked with making this new dream of cheque images a reality. The project had enjoyed political support from the then Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, who had visited the BTC and helped lobby the government to support the needed regulatory changes to transform cheques from a banking service based on paper to images. Those working on the CIP who had been sent into the CoLab for 90 days in 2016 numbered approximately 40 people, with close to double that number also part of the CIP located in London, other buildings at the BTC and developer and testing teams in India, who worked closely with the developers and testers at the CoLab via the JIRA system and daily Agile Scrum meetings.

The teams in the CoLab working 'in Agile' followed a strict time schedule of 4 week 'sprints' to complete specific technical 'chunks' or 'bitesize features' of work, with time, tasks and team hierarchies heavily structured. The software developers and testers, on the sharp end

of making sure the CIP would technically succeed, were all Indian, African American and Middle Eastern technologists, who had come to the UK on work visas specifically for this project. These staff in the CoLab were known as the 'feature factory' – an apt metaphor for the Taylorist production practices these staff in their sprint teams were subject to, such as the virtual passing on of activities in the JIRA system, which mirrored the physical factory assembly line.

In the CoLab, each sprint was broken down (or 'chunked-up' as was the euphemism in the CoLab) into daily 'Scrums' (informal huddle meetings that would take place each day), and every part of a CIP task given a 'T-shirt size' to demarcate its complexity (small for easy, medium for normal, large for complex). Physical spaces such as 'stand up' meeting rooms used by the feature factory teams were also highly managed, for example by the removal of chairs, to keep meetings as short as possible and ensure no unnecessary chat, and via the strict time limits on team meetings ('the morning stand up should never be more than 15 minutes' one Scrum Master tells me). The 'Scrum' is a framework for Agile working embraced at several spaces in the BTC, where a project team working in a four-week sprint meets every morning in the 'stand up' to assess their progress.

Expensive consultants from a large, well known UK consultancy were brought in as project managers, to oversee the feature factory teams, while leaving the day to day organization and management of these tasks in the CoLab to 'Scrum-Masters': specially trained external consultants who would attend feature factory Agile meetings and 'offer advice and suggestions', according to one Scrum-Master, while sitting close to their feature factory teams to ensure all was on track. The Scrum Masters mostly stayed in the CoLab with their teams, but they also enjoyed a high level of autonomy, leaving the site when they wanted to and deciding to work from home or their hotel rooms for example, taking personal calls while sitting at their high tables, next to the low desks of the feature factory. They would leave the CoLab for events and meetings elsewhere on site, and could enjoy long lunches. These privileges were not extended to members of the feature factory teams. We can easily identify these separations and inequalities between the Scrum Masters and their feature factory teams as distinctly neo-colonial.

Colonising Agile

In the lexicon of Agile, we cannot help but hear echoes of the leadership hierarchies embodied in colonial mastership. The title 'Scrum Master' in particular, conjures uncomfortable images of slavery, segregation and the colonial hangover of a powerful white man being required to oversee work and progress (not to mention Hegel's classic master-slave dialectic). This image was reinforced by the fact that the two Scrum Masters in the CoLab were white British, seated on high stools and tables above those teams they were overseeing, who were all non-white and from former British colonies. This neo-colonial language also resounded through the 'Scrums' and their idea of masculine games and competition at the BTC. 'Let's make this a competition for our boys, the Hackathon…will give prizes to which team builds the fastest.' This quote from 2014, before the renovation of the building that would become the CoLab had even begun, sees those white male leaders at the BTC from the Digital apps team encouraging their technologists to take Agile (and its forerunner 'Hackathon') seriously as a new way to work. Winning was important, failure a mark of shame. Chandler and Nauright have argued that following the Boer war, one of the last great wars of colonial unification and expansion: 'Rugby became a metaphor of war, and for the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest' (2013, p.123).

We shall explore metaphors of war at the BTC in detail in chapter 5, but here it is important to note that parallels with Agile work methods and the game of rugby have been made since academic papers in the late 1980s and early 1990s compared 'self-organising teams' in the corporate manufacturing and technology worlds to an effective rugby scrum (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 1986; Sutherland, 1993). The first British, public-school educated men to tour rugby around the commonwealth nations exported violence and fear as they went ('unresolved disputes and several black eyes…a cosmopolitan invitation-only team of touring gents…the Barbarians' (Rookwood, 2003)), and we may also understand Agile as an export of colonial era power and legacies of organising. From the lexicon of rugby to the micro-management practices Agile enforced on non-British, non-white bodies in the CoLab, its power stemmed from a history of imperial dominance of the master as well as the entwined, contemporary era of de-materialised technology products. This de-materialisation was found to be re-materialising in the tight management of the feature factory teams in the CoLab; even as paper cheques were being disappeared into virtual images within an app, so bodies other to

the white, light, capitalist ideal at the BTC were being re-materialised into carefully managed labour and temporalities to enable the future of the bank to dematerialise.Agile then is a work regime that is found to be accelerationist in its invention by technology CEOs attempting to create a more efficient, faster means of value creation, it is hyper-masculine because of its reliance on the image of the technology entrepreneur, a reflection of the male success stories of Silicon Valley that were very frequently referred to by male technology leaders at the BTC. Finally, Agile was neo-colonial because of the genesis of its language and the realities of its working practices, which saw workers from cheaper locations than the UK sought out to work in Agile teams, creating the bank's apps and its future, tightly controlled by white managers in the UK. As one senior leader at the BTC told me: 'dev-ops allows you to do collaborative work around the globe…with the daily Scrum, you're 15 minutes out then you're back on the pitch'. Presterudstuen (2010) has showed in his study of masculinities and rugby in post-colonial Fiji that colonialist ideals of the body and how it should perform are inscribed onto Fijian men on the rugby field, and he argues that simulation is central to the gendered practice and 'ironic compromise' (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126) the sport makes out of bodies which are other - other that is to the white public-school history of the Englishmen who invented and exported the sport across his body of colonies. Teams working in India would who would join the daily 'stand ups' at the CoLab via conference call were expected to complete their work in the same time frames as the feature factory teams at the CoLab, despite the geographical time difference between India and the UK. 'You have to have passion and commitment to succeed in Agile', Addy's warning a reflection of this reality for the Agile teams in India working on British time. Masculinised temporalities of white power were still dominant then, and a white male subjectivity of competition was how bodies were expected to experience the world in this organization.

In Agile at the Co-Lab, speed, acceleration and complete flexibility were necessary to be a good, productive member of a Scrum team, and it was required to become that reflection of the technology entrepreneur who commits fully to his technology above his own body and subjectivity, which became internalised in the fiction of Agile. As Mbembe posits, in a framework of organization such as this: 'the human subject becomes fictionalised as "an entrepreneur of the self" (Ibid, p.3), fully flexible and nomadic, travelling the globe as corporate interests demand. At the BTC there were many examples of workers travelling from

India and some African countries to the UK and back again, (particularly those who worked in the Co-Lab) on insecure work contracts that could be terminated at any time. This new kind of labour process, one built on colonial legacies in 21st century global organisation is also built on sexualised, masculine significations of Whiteness, according to Mbembe.

Agile precarity

As well as being hyper-masculine, hyper-capitalist (accelerationist) and neo-colonial, Agile as an ideology and practical methodology can also be said to be highly precarious for those who work in this way. Contingent and precarious work in organization has been a feature of critical debates in business and management for some time (Kalleberg, 2009, 2018; Ekman, 2013; Prosser, 2016; Peticca-Harris et al., 2018). Mbembe has also described his seminal 'On the Postcolony' project as 'an attempt to theorize time and subjectivity…in the conditions of a life that is fundamentally contingent and precarious' (2005, p.21). We therefore take his analysis as a very useful one for interpreting the worlds of Agile at the CoLab, and which can also offer a route for business, management and organization studies to begin to redress the lack of concern with the representation and experience of people of colour in its corpus to date. Precarity characterised the CoLab above all else - as teams moved in and out, their ticking timers up, and 'external resource' technologists and consultants left the space, their contracts un-renewed.

The hiring and firing policies that Agile teams and those consultants managing their workflows on the CIP project were subject to was a contentious topic for one male Scrum Master who spoke candidly to me over many weeks in the CoLab. He explained his feelings regarding the employment contracts of the feature factory teams one afternoon sitting at his high stool, surrounded by light wood beams, several screens flashing notifications of Agile meetings in front of him:

> 'There are fundamental questions about why we do things [shakes head], a large number [of developers and testers from India] were laid off just before Christmas…just to save money…ironically, just at the point these skills were needed.'

 The improvised labour strategy from leaders on the CIP was an attempt to maintain flexibilisation and low-cost supply-chains throughout each phase of the project according to

one leader in London who spoke to me over a phone call. The results of this excessive hiring and firing however, only added to the constant uncertainty and precarity of Agile working, and a significant inequality between the working conditions for those permanent CIP managers at the BTC (all white British), the Scrum Masters and consultants on expensive contracts that may not last the life of the project (all but one white British), and the technologists of the feature factory working in Agile on work visas (one from Turkey, another from Nigeria and a third African American, with the rest of this group having travelled to work in the UK from India, largely from the city of Pune). These technologists could be sent back at any time - a diaspora no longer required by the former Colonial bank and expelled from the motherland – which made Agile the most precarious mode to work in at the BTC.

The neo-colonial aspect to this precarity was also related to how time was conceived of and enacted in Agile; time was found to be peculiar and crucial to the Agile ideology and methodology of work going on in the CoLab. A rich literature on temporality in organization studies (Hassard, 1990, 1991, 1996; Thrift, 2004; Cunliffe et al., 2004; Halford and Leonard, 2005; Hoy, 2009; Gasparin and Neyland, 2017; Johansen and De Cock, 2017; Johnsen, Johansen and Toyoki, 2018), has seen time taken seriously as a structuring force of agency and power within organisations, as well as structured itself by spaces, aesthetics, bodies and ideologies of work. Theoretical and empirical analyses of time in organizations as embodied via subjectivities of difference is also found in gender, intersectional and queer perspectives of critique (Fagan, 2001; Araújo, 2008; Steyaert, 2015). This section aims to contribute to such debates from the perspective of the colonising time, space and experience of what Mbembe has described as postcolony.

Spivak has theorised history and time as interconnected concepts, each subject to 'the tyranny of the visible' (1999, p.38), by which she refers to time as a written discourse and sequential invention of Western-centric progress (a critique of both Hegelian and Kantian histories of time). For Mbembe (2016), postcolony embodies a time immemorial, a time mad with the stasis of colonialist mythology; there is a conflation of time and history in Mbembe's work that we may find quite productive in de-constructing Agile at the BTC (and an unusual break with traditions in both mainstream and critical organization studies). Agile at the BTC can be understood as a myth created and perpetuated by the history of the bank, and by a group of leaders invested in the bank's future becoming 'appified' (the bank's future value

being based on the success of its various banking apps). Many at the BTC in 2014-2016 had internalised the future of the bank and its success in completing Agile sprints as one and the same, a future dependent on *time being Agile*. At the CoLab, time appears to be flat and linear, black boxed into technical language and spaces and de-materialised software programmes ('that's T-shirt size medium, [the task will take] 3 days'). However, there is in fact found to be an entanglement of time in the ethnographic moments of the CoLab; multiple discontinuous times of a mythical CIP future and a past of failed sprints that mirrors what we found in the Mini-apps team of chapter 2. 'we'll have to re-configure', 'the sprint was cancelled', expressions from Scrum Masters in the CoLab when I asked about the progress of sprints, the failure of which to reach its intended conclusion, or the future desired by senior leaders at the bank, a fundamental part of Agile's experience and temporality in the CoLab, for me and for the staff on the CIP working in this space. These entanglements of time became a distinctive feature of Agile at the BTC, and were not neutral in terms of power relations. White project managers would become stressed in meetings when non-white technologists on precarious work contracts expressed any doubts, sometimes struggling to find the right expressions in English, as to the sizes or timings of the technology they were creating: 'not maybe, I want to know, we need to KNOW RIGHT NOW', one white consultant shouted at an Indian technologist when Agile time was being questioned. Yet, even some of the true believers in Agile such as Agile Coaches like Addy had to admit, albeit quietly: 'we can never really predict the future'. This paradox of temporality, the universality of time in an Agile sprint ('it's multi-million pound projects this stuff matters, it *will* be done by close of play!' The same consultant shouts) that could never be realised, a myth doomed to fail: 'we're dragging everyone kicking and screaming into Agile', another consultant tells me, as the CIP encounters another serious blocker to finishing its Agile sprint.

When I asked one Technical Manager how he would best describe working on the CIP he responded:

> 'I really recommend you read 'the Goal', I use it to train cadets. To build a bridge over shark-infested waters. That sort of thing.'

Unknown risks, fear, battles and overwhelming uncertainty were the antithesis to the secure, infinitely knowable and 'chunked-up' world Agile as a methodology of work was meant to

bring to the BTC and the CIP, according to the Agile Manifesto and evangelisers such as Addy and senior leadership at the BTC.

It became clear that Agile temporality and working methods were a car crash all of their own (to take us back to the imagery of the Introduction) - not taking the feature factory, Scrum Masters, managers and consultants of the CIP to the future that had been promised. Rather, where the CIP seemed to be crashing back to was back to the static myth of the white, male, technology entrepreneur, a stasis that led nowhere but back to the Agile Manifesto webpage of promises. What did this mean for the organization and the CIP? The Agile myth was one of contemporary culture where Silicon Valley technology companies are fetishized and simulated by other kinds of organization (as we have discussed in the previous chapter), however, this vision of success is also a timeless one, one steeped in other histories that reach back into colonial encounters and dominations of labour. The static webpage of the 'Agile Manifesto' was an abstraction, frozen in time, from the realities of complex organisation at the BTC and the embodied experiences of those working in the methodology of Agile. The lack of history and any mention of the implications of Agile on labour markets and those people who would be working in Agile can be said to make the Agile Manifesto a *deracialised* artefact, and Agile a *deracialised* mode of work and organization – one that refuses to acknowledge that the 'international migration of workers and the ensuing imbalance of power relations characterising modern capitalism' (Garner, 2010, p.21) was essential to the success of Agile as a methodology of work. In other words, the precarity and globalisation of work, of recruiting workers from anywhere in the world to work into teams controlled by managers based in Western countries (America and the UK in particular), was imbedded at the genesis of Agile, and we will see next how these precarious relationships played out in practice at the CoLab.

Agile Goodbyes

To highlight the impact of this precarity on the lives of workers in the feature factory we might consider the last CIP meeting for a small group of Indian developers (and their white British managers) before they were to leave back to Pune. I found this meeting to be an embodied example of Agile's precarious conditions of work, along with misunderstood flows of affect

for which the accelerated, task-oriented method of Agile leaves no space. The contracts of these technologists had expired and the bank failed to renew them, which was clearly a disappointment for the developers in question from their reactions, but somehow not unexpected, as they undertook their leaving of the bank with reserved composure and acceptance. They were given two boxes of traditional English cakes to share by the two Design Managers who were permanent members of staff on the CIP (an unusual privilege and positionality on this project). These cakes - Bakewell tarts and fondant fancies - were gifts that seemed to get stuck in the throats of the technologists as they said their goodbyes.

'This has been the best time of my life' one man says, looking sadly at the managers.

There is an awkward exchange of thanks. When the technologists leave the meeting room, one of the British design managers turns to the other, 'really?' and they both laugh. Tina, a female Scrum Master, tells us that the same technologists had sent emails around to their sprint team announcing their departure and re-iterating this message: 'thank you for the best time of my life'. She sighs and says: 'I just don't understand this perspective.' The ritualistic gift-giving from those who have power and control in organizations (including the State) has been discussed by Mbembe as characteristic of postcolony (2001): The gift must be received graciously, and the response must be one that subjugates itself to the dominant regime. According to Mbembe: 'The intertwining of rulers and subjects is constantly masked, sanctioned, and reiterated by way of both a ceremonial type of civility and the banality of ritualized modes of coercion' (2005, p.27). The stunned silence which meets the expression of affect and emotion, a discourse of otherness to Agile's light, fast rationality, reflected the colonising nature of this time and experience of organization; how 'resources' on short term contracts from India are treated by senior and permanent white managers at the BTC was a sign of Agile work's precarious, embodied postcolony, that enables a total flexibilisation of global labour, and the termination of work contracts once a sprint is complete sends global resources back to whence they came if this is what senior (and white) managers decide. Resources can be sent away at any time, with no autonomy to decide their own futures, an antithesis to the message of individual empowerment promised in the Agile Manifesto, and a distinctly neo-colonial reality of Agile work.

Lighten up ethnographer

My discomforted body was shaken once again when confronted with the juxtaposition of my own whiteness and privilege (the British white girl privately educated in Switzerland, the daughter of a former banker, the middle-class early career academic), and the privilege Agile bestowed or denied to bodies in the CoLab based on their histories. This was a methodological and reflexive conflict that had no satisfactory, or 'agile', solution. In the immediate invitation and accommodation for me to sit at 'the high table' with managers and Scrum Masters when I first entered the CoLab, and being encouraged away from sitting alongside the 'busy' technologists, a body of some privilege had been announced, and it would continue to structure the ethnographic flows of confession and account that came forth willingly from those in the CoLab. White Scrum Masters, male managers and female consultants, these staff would happily allow me to shadow them and openly discuss their roles, their fears and frustrations, their views on the future of the CIP, along with far more personal tales of career and home-life. But, in accessing such stories and histories from other perspectives, such as those of the non-white technologists seated across rows of lower desks in the CoLab, next to the precariously perching Scrum Masters on high tables, a significant silencer proved to be carried in this body.

Was I another guilty party in 'filtering ideas through white intermediaries', as Zoe Todd (2016, p.3), the de-colonial anthropologist and critical feminist has argued becomes so common when post-colonial thought circulates through the Western academy? It's not possible for this question to be answered here, but this project must bear its responsibility for my own place in the flows of the BTC, and the ease by which whiteness and class have allowed physical and political access and acceptance among a privileged set of actors and decision makers at the BTC (all white, mostly male).

Responsibility must also be taken for how this body has meant some stories have remained untold; accounts of subjectivities of non-white technologists from overseas, both men and the two women working in such roles in the CoLab, are missing in the ethnographic story telling of the CoLab this project has attempted. Over the months I was present at the fieldsite, I made repeated efforts to speak candidly to, befriend, or eavesdrop on groups of Indian and black coders and testers in the CoLab. However, these attempts were overwhelmingly a failure. My presence was never neutral or ignored, and as this body moved closer to non-

white technologists, they would always become silent. On one occasion I had managed to remain unnoticed sitting at an empty desk opposite an Indian technologist when some of his colleagues came over to his desk to talk to him. Suddenly I was introduced to the very warm informalities of relations between Indian co-workers who had experienced similar journeys of lives transformed by moving to this BTC from Pune or Delhi or other big Indian cities, and the transition in language from Hindi to English and back again. However, the interloper was soon spotted, a body out of place - a white woman watching and recording something in her serious looking notebook. Suddenly all three men nodded at me deferentially, and the visitors quickly moved away from their friend's desk with a whisper of 'see you later, join us at lunch.' The question of legitimacy of representation is therefore a partial and difficult one for this ethnography, as I did not share the journeys, working conditions or positionality of the non-white, non-British contract workers at the BTC, and was not able to record an explicit account of their experiences (see my talks with an Indian Technologist in chapter 2 and a Filipino Technologist in chapter 4 for two rare exceptions). Therefore, this research is a voice for recording into posterity what I saw and experienced at the BTC as neo-colonial practices I choose to describe as here postcolony – following from Mbembe's work (2001). It is a vehicle for representing what had not before been represented in studies of business, management and organization, and for exploring the links between the colonial history of this bank and the contemporary working practices and temporalities the BTC's foreign workers in the UK were subject to in 2014-2016. This work cannot and does not however, claim to speak for these groups at the BTC; 'a deafening silence reigns where too impolitic questions are to be asked' (Six-Hohenbalken and Weiss, 2016, p.34), or where access was denied by either the managers of these workers or my own colonising whiteness of the Western academie.

When I was able to pose questions to feature factory technologists in the CoLab, there would be a silent and politely smiling response, with nods and pleading in the eyes for me to go away quite common. Sometimes short statements like: 'we are very happy here, thank you ma'am', were expected to meet the curious questions and get rid of this odd and nosy researcher from their space. Even on one occasion when I persuaded Tina, the female Scrum Master, to leave the room for a few minutes in order to facilitate a confidential and frank exchange between a small group of Indian developers and myself, 'anything you say will be anonymous' - there was suspicion and nervous laughter instead of any opening up of the inner worlds and

sentiments of this unique and closely-knit group at the CoLab. This group worked together, sat together, went for lunch together in groups (rarely buying from the expensive on-site restaurant, instead bringing lunchboxes in plastic bags they carried together), and left the site to travel back to their homes together in large coaches the bank provided to shuttle contracted workers at the BTC to work and the train station or other transport hubs each day. Contractors were 'banned' from using the car park at this rural site, a decision the site management committee were very proud of having made, as it solved the 'congestion problem in the car parks', but which also spatially displaced workers who were overwhelmingly non-white and non-British into another flow of inequality, their bodies were colonised in the liminal spaces of the BTC as well as the Agile work spaces of the CoLab. One night in winter I joined some of the technologists on their walk out of the rural site after work, in the pitch black darkness they each used torches from their phones to light the way through a path thick with mud thanks to the inclement weather. I nearly fell over into the muddy ground, it was a nervous and unsafe journey, and I suddenly felt lucky to be able to drive into the site each day, despite the potential for another car crash. As I had been granted the privilege of parking in one of the many site carparks rather than make a complex and long journey via other modes of transport or park along a busy A-road road each day, perhaps I should just be quiet and lighten up – to paraphrase Todd (2016). The non-British contractors in the CoLab had their own closed community of material relations, coping mechanisms and collective solidarity at the fieldsite, along with their own pact of silence when faced with the whiteness of the ethnographer and the colonising potential and history of ethnography, that discourse that ends as text for the Western academy. The secrets of this group would remain largely elusive for me and this project.

Every(Agile)body

I was able to interview one young man working as a technologist in the feature factory of the CoLab, after several persistent requests to his Scrum Master; Joseph had come to the UK to help his career and send money back to Turkey for his parents and to build a future 'back home'. He would talk carefully and slowly about his technical work, with his Scrum Master able to overhear at all times in the open plan CoLab. I was struck by how, through the proximity of the Scrum Master and the ability of each member of Joseph's team to see his

work in the Kan-ban board, the feature factory team were encouraged to assimilate, and differences were flattered, 'We all work in the same way here', Joseph tells me. Agile required a coercive control for its ideal of so called 'dev-ops' to be realised. 'Dev-ops' was talked about by each team I spent time with at the BTC, and was understood as the ideal that every team member should be able to: 'pick up any piece of work from JIRA and run with it' (Middleware manager, 2016). The idea was for *any body* to be able to develop and operationalise technology, since the genesis and subjectivity of bodies do not matter in Agile and dev-ops, rather, a Western body of order and enlightened rationality within the Agile model of work is taken for granted – *every body* will be equally fast and light and made in the image of the while man, the technology entrepreneur – and everybody will be happy for their movements, their time and experiences to be managed by Agile rules.

As I sat next to Joseph in his small desk cubicle I felt that subjectivity and time were only supposed to exist for the feature factory through completing their urgent sprints, through reporting progress to their Scrum master up above us on features that were being 'progressed' in every Agile-managed chunk of time (daily morning 'stand up', 'scrum huddle', 'mad, sad, glad session' at the end of a sprint, etc). In this paradigm, there was no time or space for that which is 'other' to Agile norms of temporality or identity, and we again find we are back facing the idealised image of the white, male technology entrepreneur – light and fast and 'ready for collaboration with innovative guys' (Digital Apps manager, 2014). This is the time of Silicon Valley progress, that has become normalised and internalised in discourse at the BTC. Thinking back to my discussions with the Digital apps team manager, he had told me of the 'golden era' when Ping-it, the bank's flagship payments app, was being developed: 'we used to order pizza and stay till 10pm. But that was never a problem, everyone was on board, [we had] a start-up culture, very fast.' The transformation from bankers into technologists and 'innovators' could be traced to the creation of this, the bank's first payments app, and an idealised culture of a small group of successful white men making the bank's future – quickly!

However, in this assimilation to Agile norms of time and subjectivities, we also find Mbembe's 'time as an interlocking of pasts, presents and futures' (2001, p.16), in Agile's inability to manage the colonial past of the bank, its own genesis or the future and its excesses of

organization (Rehn and O'Doherty, 2007). In the co-existence of these, we find a failure to de-racialise Agile work by 'chunking it up' into manageable and knowable categories of time and space, as it attempts to do, vanishing bodies in the same way as the appification we find at the Mini-pps team in chapter 2. We instead find at the CoLab an entanglement of time and subjectivity more complex than the Agile Manifesto could ever encompass. Addy's caution to me that not every*body* on a project will embrace Agile: 'some worry they will lose their identity… It should be about letting go…many may not wish to', demonstrated that which Mbembe has called disturbances, oscillations, even sometimes chaos (2001, p.17) of time and experience being produced by Agile work. Not all bodies and subjectivities could be assimilated into Agile and the image of the white, male technology entrepreneur, and Mbembe has critiqued such discourses around futures in the postcolony as being nothing more than 'each of us turning into an entrepreneur, making lots of money and becoming a good consumer' (2015, p.4). We find a reflection of this colonising idea in Agile methodologies of work and the drive at the BTC towards re-branding the bank from a corporate behemoth, slow moving and where heads of HR used to say 'you have a job for life' (according to the story of a Technology Architect at Babbage House who arrived at the bank in 1986), to a new future of people as 'resources', or even 'self-directing teams' (with neo-colonial Scrum Masters to direct the directing) in Agile:

> 'they have to deliver in three months…learn quicker…break-out areas…whiteboards…something different for the next app…that's the measure of success' (former 'Ping-it' senior manager).

In this story, the bank's customer had also been transformed; those who downloaded the bank's app were the good consumers Mbembe speaks about as fundamental to his postcolony, reproducing this mode of organization in their modes of consumption (2001, p.129). No longer was a customer a real person in a high street bank branch somewhere situated in time and space, to be helped with managing their money, or even to be sold banking services to. Rather, the customer of the future looked like a mirror image of the bank itself, existing on the plane of the virtual, disembodied and significantly, *de-racialised* via the smartphone app. These customers were driven by the next technology iteration and app download, hungry for a faster, more 'agile', light and white, future. The agile bodies of technologically driven customers seeking market choice that the BTC envisions, can be

compared to Emily Martin's 'flexible bodies' - both physical, virtual and metaphorical bodies that are 'entrepreneurial' and 'engaged in market-oriented practices' (1994, p.147), enabling organization to be ready to move with an unpredictable, threatening future. However, the future was found to be predictable indeed in that each new iteration of the bank's apps (such as those that were being planned for the CIP), were always de-racialised. The erasure of racial conflict and tension began with project managers and senior leaders imagining customers with no race, to then requiring 'lean and agile workers' to create these apps, who also had no race. If we use Garner's definition of the term "racialisation" to mean the political and social process by which different groups are constructed into racially distinct difference, and which 'is ongoing and multifaceted. It is very much part of the contemporary world and unfinished business' (2010, p.21), we may appoint the 'de-racialised' term to signify the attempted removal of racialised artefacts and discourses, in order to avoid an engagement with discourses of race and histories of colonialism, maintaining the status quo in organizations, particularly those with headquarters in the West. Augoustinos and Every have argued that 'downplaying race as an explanatory construct may allow for the continued institutionalisation of racial exclusion' (2007, p.133), and we see similar arguments being made in social construction of technology debates – where some have called for racialisation to help in the 'historicising and contextualising of computers' (Donner, 2005, p.95) and to widen participation in exclusionary technologies that pretend race and difference do not exist, and that technologies have not been racialised in their design, application and dissemination. If the technologies of Agile are those which 'embody, transmit, and produce ontologies of normativity which result in privilege and discrimination' (Wittkower, 2018), then we may argue that Agile is an example of *de-racialising organisation* – removing any reference to race and difference in the practices that maintain neo-colonial inequalities. The blindness of contemporary practices at the BTC to this organization's own colonial history is significant; this enables the bank to forge ahead in the Western image of the white, male technology entrepreneur, as this was apparently 'what the customer wants…to choose amazing ideas, passion…new banking apps' (according to the former Ping-it manager), without recourse to those workers from developing countries on precarious work contracts who the bank requires to build the 'bank of the future' and make the fantasy of made-in-Agile banking apps real.

When the realities of the complex CIP projects did exceed Agile categories, and ideals of completing sprints in the 30 days stipulated in the Agile Manifesto or by Addy the Agile Coach failed, we may see this as a failure of simplistic models of temporality that pose progress or rupture as its only categories, and whose 'sole concern is to account for models of Western modernity or the failures of non-European worlds to perfectly replicate it' (Mbembe, 2001, p.23). This was a failure of de-racialised organization to create the 'bank of the future'.

The frustrations of these discontinuities of working in Agile became more perceptible the longer I remained with the CIP teams in the CoLab. A repeated and collective cynicism towards Agile and the premise of the CIP was found to be shared by many: 'banks are very susceptible to people who come along and sell them snake oil' said the Technical Architect responsible for designing the cheque imaging infrastructure, who believed Agile was akin to a con. One business manager to the CIP, who had decided to leave the project as I arrived, in her frustration at 'not getting things done', was even more frank about the resentment towards leaders in London driving this project and their focus on Agile teams in the CoLab: 'they don't listen to us', and the millions of pounds that had been invested into the CIP: 'We're pissing money up the wall here'. Cynicism as a tool of resistance to dominant work regimes and as a way to forge collective identities at work has been researched by many scholars in the CMS canon: Andersson, 1996; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Fleming, 2005; Swan and Fox, 2010; Ybema and Horvers, 2017; Thomas and Gupta, 2018), and the cynicism found in the CoLab was found to be a response to the linear certainties of time and subjectivity that Agile proclaimed to be about: 'It's supposed to work like that [Agile] but that's not how this is working…it's really not working! (Loud laughter from everyone in the room)'.

Powerful regimes are forced to 'function empty and powerless' (Mbembe, 1992, p.25) when bodies break codes of colonisation; when these regimes are laughed at or derided in ways that aim to neutralise their force. We may argue such a resistive move was exactly what took place at the meetings in the CoLab where Agile was implicitly agreed as incompatible with the flexibility and autonomy it promised to enable, where laughing or cynicism or swearing reflected a collective resistance to the colonisation of Agile work. In fact frustrations were bemoaned most openly of all at the high tables of the Scrum Masters and permanent BTC managers in the CoLab, who would tease me that they did not care what I wrote in my report about the bank or if their criticisms of Agile and the CIP reached their bosses 'make sure you

let the big boys [senior bosses at the bank] know Nigel said that! [laughter from the high table]'. However, the feature factory technologists sitting physically below the high tables, whose movement and activities were carefully managed by the apparatus of Agile (timers, Kanban boards, post-it notes, routinized timed meetings and sprint deadlines) were not to speak up (their busy-ness a recurring excuse for my not being able to sit with other feature factory team members and ask what their thoughts were on Agile). Instead they were to work through their next application iteration as quickly and 'collaboratively' as possible, staying at their desks please. When one member of the feature factory team did speak up about his concerns regarding Agile however, a highly provoking ethnographic episode was played out at the CoLab.

Darrell's Agile

Darrell comes into his 'Mad, Sad, Glad' meeting. This is a reflective session held at the end of each four week sprint, where the Scrum team (technologists: developers and testers) discuss with their Scrum Master what worked well in the sprint and what could be improved (what made us 'mad, sad and glad', with smiley and sad faces drawn on a whiteboard to help with such categorizations (see *Figure 18*). The meeting is held in a large green meeting room in the CoLab with two glass walls and one large window looking out over the rural landscape of the site. All the attendees of the meeting are men except for me and Tina, the young, white, female Scrum Master. All the seven men are contractors from India, except Darrell who is African American, and Onome who is from Nigeria. Darrell differs from the other technologists dressed mostly in smart dark pullovers and carrying nothing, as he wears a bright red shirt and carries a big camping bag on his back, holding in his hand a plastic cup of what looks to be tomato soup – a thick red liquid that seems to make others in the room uneasy (or queasy) as they stare at it. Darrell also carries a pile of papers in the other hand, these are to pin to the whiteboard, props to help ensure the points he is ready to make are heard. He is the only member of the team to have these. 'These are just from a stream of consciousness that came out of the sprint' he tells the room as he begins pinning these to the whiteboard. Tina asks for the team's feedback on the sprint: 'what made us feel mad, sad or glad?' There is an uncomfortable and shuffling silence as Darrell jumps in and addresses point after point of critique on the Agile method of managing the work this team has been doing:

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'The thing most organizations don't realise', Darrell begins pointedly, 'is that Agile should challenge hierarchy. So they find this very difficult.' The statement is met with more stunned silence from Darrell's fellow sprint colleagues.

Tina casually thanks Darrell and says she will mention this at the next 'Agile Working Group' – a monthly management meeting about Agile where CIP senior managers from London as well as from the BTC gather on a conference call to 'decide on the future' and discuss the ongoing issues of the CIP. The last session I had listened in on continued for a whole afternoon, and had been intense, political and difficult: tensions between leaders in London and technical managers in the North dominated, and there was never any mention of feedback from or conditions regarding the 'feature factory' (the developers and testers in the CoLab).

'No one listens to me anyway' Darrell replies dryly. 'Another point: isn't micro-management anathema to the Agile process?' He sees the madness in Scrum Masters and the JIRA system dictating every move he (as a competent Technologist who understands the CIP software) makes, when the Agile philosophy professes an ideal of 'self-organising teams' and 'autonomy from traditional management hierarches'. Pointing out this paradox incites difficult feelings from others in his team working under the same conditions, however.

One of the Indian technologists cuts across Darrell as he says this and speaks over him in a loud voice: 'we go through the motions!' But Darrell won't be silenced: 'Can I finish?' The Indian developer shakes his head: 'Is this of any use to *the customer*?!'

Mbembe argues that once colonial power structures and knowledge systems are internalised, the 'authoritarian epistemology' becomes part of the flow of all bodies in organization 'to the point where they reproduce it themselves…the whole political economy of the body' (Mbembe, 1992, p. 25). Here, the Indian Developer asserts the image of 'the customer' as ammunition against disobedience to Agile logic that represents a colonising mode of organization at the bank. The interjection wraps up all the bodies of the technologists with one unified *politically economic* body – an embodiment dependent on the economic viability of the technologies the technologists create, and this viability is decided ultimately by the image of the customer, invoked as the mirror image of the bank in its bright future of digitally-enabled choice. The market for the products this team is creating is a competitive one, one

that requires the latest release on the app store on time, and the Indian developer's veiled threat to Darrell that his body does not matter unless he accepts Agile and the customer's body as his own, unless he conforms to colonisation of his body of difference, is an example of Mbembe's internalisation of colonising organization, of the postcolony in action.

Another Indian developer agrees: 'Darrell, you are unnecessarily criticising and causing a scene.'

Darrell: 'We are treating our test team like second class citizens!'

The test teams had been told that they could not wear headphones, Darrell being told 'this is un-collaborative' when he asked one of the CIP managers for some way of concentrating at his desk in the open plan CoLab. Darrell was arguing the right to agency over one's body and privacy had been stripped away by the Agile ideology of constant 'collaboration', or availability for work, and having no say in the tasks they do and how or which activities they are to pick up next on JIRA. Darrell's argument is that injustice and inequality have become normalised in this team's organization under Agile.

Onome, a tester from Nigeria, joins the debate with a mediating tone: 'I know some teams who have broken the sprint. They re-prioritize with stakeholders based on a new goal…but the organization has to be willing for us to do this.'

What was happening in this exchange of words? Was the only other black man in the room advocating to 'break' the Agile regime in defence of a brother from a shared colonial history? Is this the playing out of one postcolony (India) against another (Africa)? Was the African American struggle for justice being fought at the time of this exchange on the streets of U.S. States (such as Louisiana, Baton Rouge - where hundreds of protesters would descend shortly after this meeting to mourn the killing of an unarmed black man by white police officers), also being fought out in the stratified spaces of the CoLab? Was Agile the new white enemy of black power? Was Agile at the BTC oppression in a new guise returning as a temporality of technology fetishism and white entrepreneurial spirit?

Tina says nothing, she is standing back and looking at her phone.

Darrell seems to have had enough. 'I have a restricted train ticket, I've got to go.'

The Indian developer who had spoken across him says: 'Darrell, don't take anything personally.'

The body and its exclusions and inculcations in organization is not a personal concern in Agile. Rather, the body becomes an important vessel for colonisation and organizing: for the bank to succeed in creating its future.

Darrell responds sarcastically while loading the large camping bag back onto his back: 'No, I'm a professional. This is my professional voice'.

He leaves the room.

After the meeting is over, I stay back with Tina and inquire about Darrell.

'Oh yes, he has some issues, Darrell's quite a character.' She says coolly, flicking her hair. 'But he'll be fine'.

It seemed there was no concern that Darrell's serious objections to working in Agile would result in his leaving the project (this would have been very difficult for the CIP as Darrell was an experienced software Tester who ensured many aspects of the work in his team could be completed). Rather, Darrell's embodied experience of Agile was to be brushed over, hurriedly moved on from so the next iteration of the future would be ready on time.

Agile postcolony

Darrell's reaction to the parameters of Agile and its embodied consequences are marked as *excessive* by his Scrum Master and all but one other technologist (the only other black man) in his team. Achille Mbembe has described the forces which drive the postcolony: 'a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery which, once they are in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence' (Mbembe, 1992, p.3). Such violence we argue here is specifically at play in the Agile regimes of the CoLab and the CIP.

Ethnographic work at the CoLab found the myths of a work method which professed to provide autonomy and collaboration to 'self-governing teams', were disintegrating into a colonial stratification of work and bodies, a 'production of violence and the arrangements for allocating privileges and means of livelihood' (Mbembe, 2001, p.43). In Agile at the CIP, every

action must be accounted for and mirrored in the virtual 'JIRA' system and every iteration of a technology categorized into a 'T-shirt size', and an unwillingness to do so, or a will to manage one's own body of work and time outside this system, is denounced as unproductive for the goals of the project and for the customer, and experienced as a threat. As Mbembe has described of conditions under the postcolony: 'docility and productivity go hand in hand' (Mbembe, 1992, p.12), and without the first it can be impossible for ideologies that dominate the social worlds of organization to succeed. In other words, for workers to remain docile, Agile (and especially Agile at the BTC) must be effective in erasing its history and privilege (of accelerated capitalism, violent public-school rugby tours and masculine lightness), and instead inspire faith in those which it seeks to colonise. Many members of the closely-knit teams of technologists in the feature factory were found to be seeking to meet the expectations of Agile bodies: 'we want to demonstrate interactivity, smiley faces', 'we are very happy here, thank you ma'am' were phrases offered to me, as they strived to simulate the Agile 'dev ops' ideal their Scrum Master, Agile Coach and other CIP managers expected of them, despite the material inequalities they were subject to. We may call this a complicity in the creation of postcolony at the CoLab, however, there was also a strong and challenging voice of resistance to Agile's tight controls and boundaries in organization, and this we may argue the is the postcolonial voice, one resisting and attempting to reveal the colonising nature of Agile, following the call González has made to show voices that challenge the colonial order of things 'after the colonial' (2003).

As 'the relationship between rulers and ruled is forged by means of a specific practice: simulacrum' (Mbembe, 1992, p.10), so the regime of Agile at the bank promises the technologist that he (or she – in rare cases) can be the hero of their own story, that gender or colour no longer matter. Agile is an end of gens in this story; "gens" being that word Donna Haraway has called 'patriarchal by origin, with which feminists are playing' (2016,p.208), or even, an end of the colony. But an end of gender, generations (of history and legacy) and genesis that new forms of capitalism promise (Bear *et al.*, 2015), holds another myth Agile can never live up to, and instead we find a mode of organizing that de-racialises work, and which fails to manage the future, uncertainty, excess and otherness in organization. We find this happening in meetings where white consultants are angry at Indian technologists, and as the baleful head of failure looms ever larger in the reflections of the cheque imaging

technology: 'there's been another delay from industry… this may kill us' or even in threats from one London leader to sue me for describing some of the realities of the CIP: 'these comments are inflammatory…whose authorised this project?...who will be held accountable?...we may need to consider legal action'.

The contradiction and stasis of Agile's promise is in fact found in its lack of gens – of generativity – in its inability to create something new. Agile as a methodology and ideology of work recreates and re-colonises the same histories and exploitations as any capitalist and colonial regime that has preceded it (for example Taylorism, as we have discussed above). The virtual credit that the 'clearing hub' will automatically generate for the customer of the digital cheque is no different from paper cheques cashed in at a bank before they transfer money or bounce, and towards the end of my time with the CIP it was realised that the white vans would not in fact be taken off the road, along with new research into cheque usage that found a steady market that is not in fact in decline – all myths that Agile's mythic promises could never have solved after all. Workers who were tasked with creating a future of digital images for the bank via Agile 'self-organising teams' were found to be just as tightly monitored and controlled as those working under more traditional work regimes too - another myth busted. There was nothing new, no generative future or history Agile could produce, in the ethnographic experiences of fieldwork at the CoLab.

Agile fills up organisation with anything but generativity, any action managed via the virtual to-do lists and activity trackers that avoid the possibility for thinking, acting and managing differently to the colonising structures and work practices Agile creates. The 'generative power of race, kinship and nation' (Bear et al., 2015) is erased by capitalism's accelerationist approach to the future that we find at the CoLab, where regimes of work that mimic colonial structures of control attempt to erase difference, embodied experience and time as anything other than those of the Agile Manifesto.

Final thoughts

What we have begun to unpack in this chapter is a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony*; a precarity of time and experience in organization when teams were working in the work methodology of Agile, that is distinctly neo-colonial in its history and contemporary practices

at the BTC. That Agile proclaims to be an end of gens, where all bodies are treated the same and histories, race, colour and gender do not matter in the self-directed and virtual work of the technology entrepreneur, enable us to call Agile an example of *de-racialising organization*, and brings the 'post-' of Mbembe's postcolony empirical resonance to contemporary debates in business, management and organization studies. In an era where Empire has vanished for academics and industry professionals talking and writing about organization, (and where many non-white, non-Western groups feel marginalised in Western academic institutions and conferences (Todd, 2016, 2018)) yet where workers from former British colonies can be brought over on short term precarious work contracts to the UK, in order to work for a formerly 'Colonial Bank', via the close monitoring and direction of white British 'Scrum Masters', some declaring they are treated like 'second class citizens', unable to park on site and having to leave together on a special bus – it is under these circumstances that we can begin to understand the continued presence of colonial power structures in post-colonial times. These circumstances show us the existence of a space and time of what we have called here a postcolony in organizations. There is therefore a necessity for post-colonial research projects to become a far more mainstream occupation in organization studies. There is a need for research which attempts to engage with fieldwork and theory 'against the grain' (in Prasad's terms, 2015) of taken-for-granted Eurocentric approaches to knowledge building, and for ethnographic encounters in particular to help unpack and to explore these realities in organizations, the lived realities of which are often hidden behind the 'shiny app-y' brands and exciting new technology products of organizations such as banks.
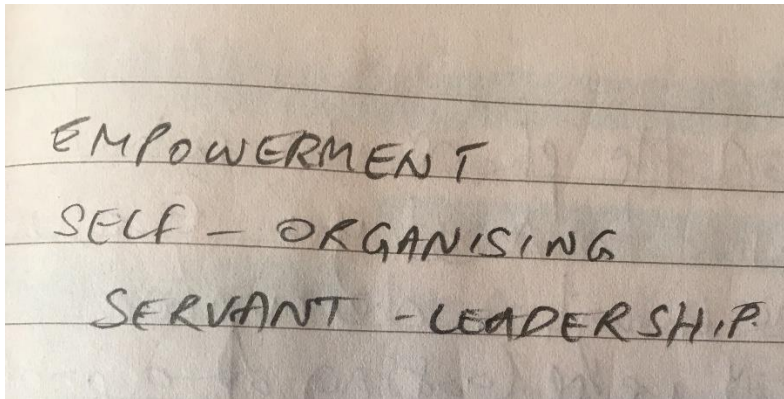
If we end this chapter by returning to our two interlocutors at the CoLab, Addy and Darrell, it might be argued that these Agile workers represent the conformist co-conspirator and the resistive rebel to Agile rule, or we might say these are two embodied subjectivities of Agile working in the CoLab – both embodying a colonised materiality enacted differently: created and structured by Agile. Mbembe has written of the ambiguities and ironic compromises that go along with being a subject of postcolony: 'What defines the postcolonised subject is the ability to engage in baroque practices which are fundamentally ambiguous, fluid and modifiable even in instances where there are clear, written and precise rules.' (1992, p.25). Addy and Darrell were found to be espousing the praises of Agile whilst simultaneously suffering under its regime (Addy), and attempting to critique and subvert Agile while also

maintaining a role within the Agile sprint and not leaving (Darrell). In the recounting of stories from the CoLab and the CIP above, we have found the work regime of Agile to be a colonising, de-racialising force that coerces those who work under it to internalise Agile ideology, often into an embodied experience of deference, sadness, frustration and sacrifice of thinking and acting differently. Mbembe describes this process as what happens when the power of postcolony requires ratification from those living under its regime to make it real:

'…power compels its subjects ritualistically to perform, within and through the mundane practices of everyday public life, a ratification of its own theatricality and excess. In the process, power does not simply lay claims to its subjects through coercion and violence. "Coercive" power also compels its subjects to rearticulate that power, to confer grandeur on it, and to do this through a convivial participation in simulation of that power.' (Mbembe, 2005, p.26).

The next chapter in this story will focus on Mbembe's side-stepped contribution in regards to studies of organisation, business and management, in order for a more fleshed-out concept of postcolony for contemporary organization to be discussed, and for an argument to be made that a sincere engagement with Mbembe's work and concept of postcolony in particular, can help to move organization, business and management studies, and particularly CMS, on and away from Eurocentric and masculine epistemological histories, which, as we have seen from the stories at the CoLab, continue to dominate organizational life at the BTC.

Figure 13: Addy's words: Addy's description of Agile as 'empowerment', 'self-organising', and 'servant – leadership'.
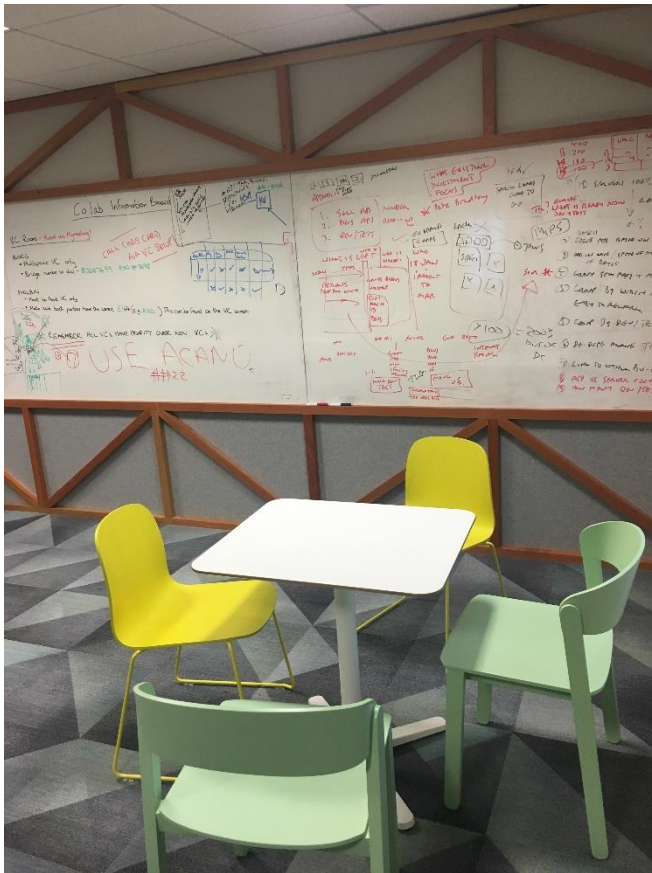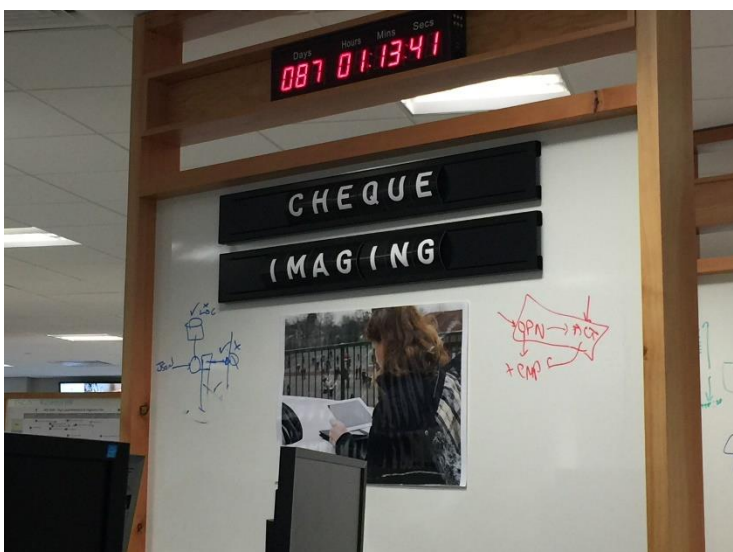

Figure 14: Addy's art: A small part of Addy's graphical representation of Agile. The drawings of a lightbulb, a money note alongside Agile lexicon stand out.
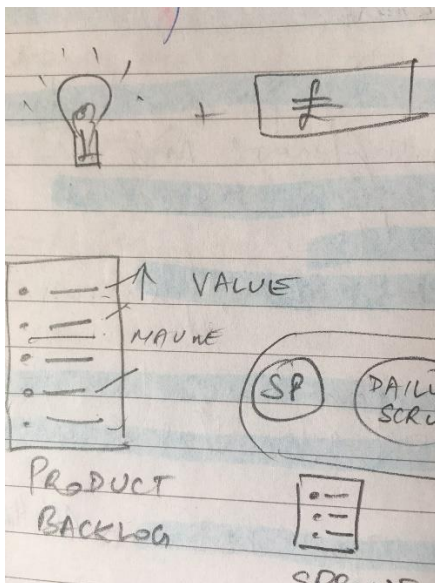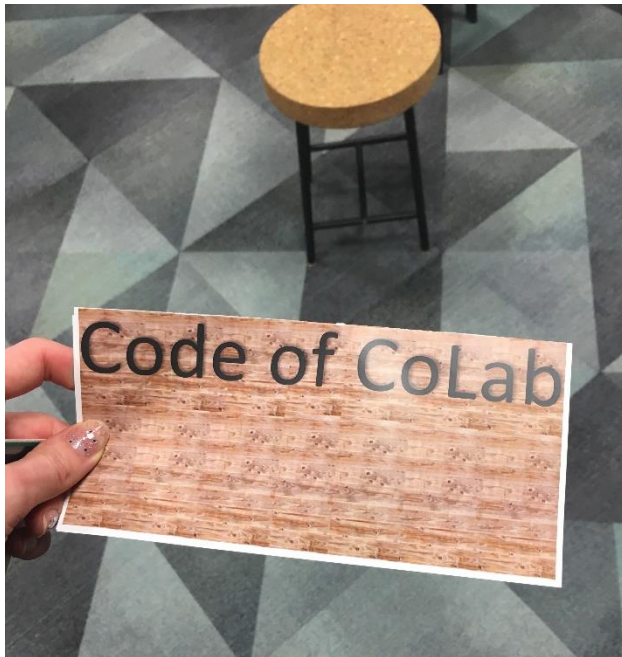
*Figure 15*: Empty CoLab: An empty table and chairs in the middle of the CoLab.

Figure 16: Time bomb: The timer counts down the CIP's remaining time in the CoLab.

Figure 17: Code of CoLab: A booklet describing the 'rules' of the CoLab. Bodies must follow these to remain in this space of privilege at the BTC.

Figure 18: Mad, Sad, Glad Agile: The female Scrum Master from London runs her Scrum's 'Mad, Glad, Sad' session.
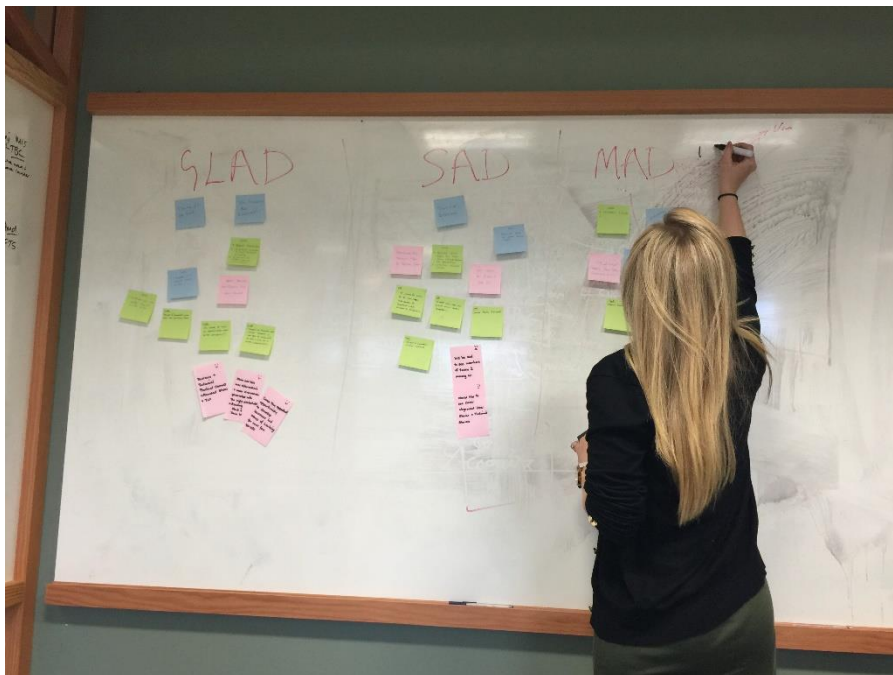
Figure 19: CoLab layout: A detailed layout of the CoLab space. Sprint and Huddle spaces, living rooms, lounges and Hubs define the borders of CoLab and its politics. The ticking timer with '90' in its centre is a logo to represent the countdown from the start of 90 days technology teams in the CoLab have to complete their projects.
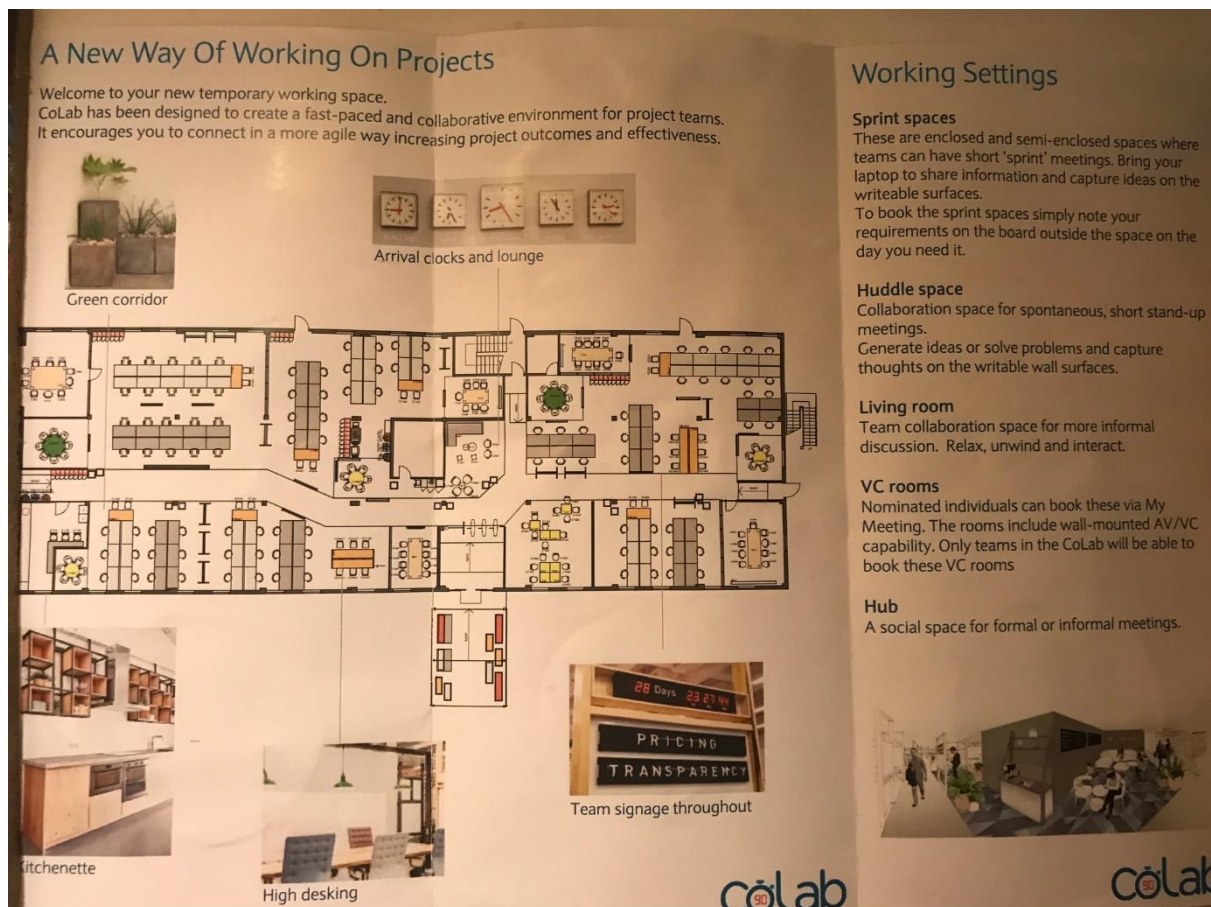
Figure 20: Pigs can fly: Flying pigs are a new decoration at one kitchen following a CRES refurbishment.

Chapter 4:

In Conversation with Mbembe

"we must say that the postcolony is a period of embedding, a space of proliferation that is not solely disorder, chance, and madness, but emerges from a sort of violent gust, with its languages, its beauty and ugliness, its ways of summing up the world".

- *Achille Mbembe, On the Postcolony, 2001, p.242*

Mbembe's Postcolony

'Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, Blackness and race have constituted the (unacknowledged and often denied) foundation…from which the modern project of knowledge – and governance – has been deployed.'

Some of the introductory words to Achille Mbembe's 2017 book 'Critique of Black Reason' give us an insight into his ambitious and, as has been argued in this thesis, vital intellectual project. Mbembe's epistemological position also explains why his work is of such consequence for a thesis that aims to write 'against the grain' of mainstream models of critique in organization, business and management studies - that aims to do postcolonial ethnography at a bank technology centre in the UK in the late noughties.

As we have discussed in chapter 1, questions of race in organization remain a somewhat taboo concern for many scholars in business, management and organization studies, and postcolonial themes circulate on the periphery of mainstream debates (Richard, 2000; Jayne and Dipboye, 2004; Georgiou, 2011; Andrevski et al., 2011; Carton and Rosette, 2012; Peralias

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and Romero-Ávila, 2017). Those scholars who are interested in questions of postcoloniality and the legacy of empire for organization (Banerjee, 2018; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Banerjee, Mir and Mir, 2008; Alcadipani and Faria, 2014; Prasad, Mills and Mills, 2015; Faria, 2013; Zorn, 2005; Cooke, 2003(a), 2003(b), 2004; Mir, Mir and Upadhyaya, 2003; Prasad; Harding, 1996), from the critical management studies (CMS) diaspora, have yet to engage with questions of colonising regimes of organising and the de-racialisation of organization. Mbembe's work has also been conspicuously absent from CMS, (with the rare exception of Banerjee, 2008), and, as we have described in the first chapter, specifically the concept of postcolony and its implications for organization has not been engaged with.

What Mbembe has been working towards since arguably *Provisional notes on the Postcolony* (1992), and certainly since his time as a Professor at the Witwatersrand Institute for Social and Economic research in Johannesburg, South Africa, is a 'decentering' (Mbembe, 2017, p.8) of European and Western traditions of thought, a way of thinking through the legacies and continued power of slavery, colonialism and Western models of capitalism via an attention to what he has described as the fictional categories of Blackness and Race. Those 'Western traditions of thought' can be regarded as the modes of inquiry from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment that emanated from European thinkers, those Mbembe has called the 'European spatial horizon' which 'went hand in hand with a division and shrinking of the historical and cultural imagination' (2017, p.17). These epistemes, which are intimately tied to the power of the Christian church through this time period and beyond, and ideas of Cartesian unity of mind and body created in the image of a Christian God, have been the dominant epistemes in the political world order for centuries, and have been founded on 'the representation of non-European groups as trapped in a lesser form of being…the impoverished reflection of the ideal of man, separated from him by an insurmountable temporal divide' (Ibid). In attempting to de-centre this canon of philosophy, Mbembe follows in the footsteps of other Western philosophers (Foucault, Deleuze, Haraway), however Mbembe approaches this project from a postcolonial theoretical perspective and one of lived experience as a black man, his work occupying an 'interstitial space somewhere between poststructuralism and existential phenomenology' (Wheate, 2003, p.27). His 'de-centering' is one that explores essentialised categories and makes something more with them, explicitly deconstructing and rejecting the 'partition of the world' (2017, p.54) into categories that the

Western writers of history have erected. This chapter will discuss the implications of this thesis for Mbembe's conceptual project of postcolony and post-colonial scholarship in organization studies, particularly that which seeks to speak to and with Mbembe's work in the future, contributions which this author hopes to see proliferate in the years to come within critical organization circles. We will first trace out, following the discussions in previous chapters, Mbembe's full contribution to postcolonial and critical theory, one that, as this thesis has discussed in chapter 1, has been side-stepped by business, management and organization literatures almost entirely. Mbembe's concept of postcolony has been discussed in terms of its productive capacity for understanding temporality, spatiality and experience at the BTC, with an attention to the lineage of the postcolony in colonising modes of organising, and the distinction between the colony and Mbembe's time, space and experiential encounter of 'post' colony. This distinction may also help us to understand the significance of this project's engagement with Mbembe – rather than other post-colonial or feminist theorists, for example. The postcolony has been argued here to be the concept that brings together colonising experiences of brands at the BTC and the work methodology of Agile, and it is postcolony which has enabled this research project to work 'against the grain' (Prasad, 2012 in the CMS canon, as well as Stoler, 2010, Harrison, 1993, and Benjamin, 1969) while doing ethnography at the BTC.

The postcolony is above all else a phenomenon of the contemporary: the contemporary Africa after colonialism, the contemporary time of late capitalism (Sennett, 2006), and the contemporary modalities of work, which, as argued in chapter 2, maintain much of the inequality as those during the era of colonial Empire. However, the time indicated by the 'post' of the 'postcolony' indicates that this concept is very distinct from the thinking of Frantz Fanon, which Mbembe cites and engages with extensively in The Postcolony. Fanon's intellectual and activist project to decolonise Algeria from 'the settler and his rule of oppression' (Fanon, 1961, p.37) in the 1950s and 1960s, was one taking place during violent colonial suppression, and Mbembe's context of interest in post-colonial Africa. Mbembe's work is also a departure from the projects of Spivak and Bhabha in their search for representation of the subaltern (the former), and understanding hybrid and ambivalent identities of colonised peoples (the latter). Indeed, Mbembe might be argued to be following Said's emphasis on a 'recognition of the pastness of postcolonialism' (Mishra and Hodge,

2005, p.376), in his negative vision of the future for postcolony - thanks to its history and genesis. The postcolony is a conjuring up of the dead in Mbembe's words, a spirit of 'animated colonial racism and…everything that came after it in the time of postcolony' (Mbembe, 2017, p.128). However, in the postcolony we find the unique positioning of a time, space and social order after colonisationwhich explicitly announces that encounter. There is an emphasis on repetition in Mbembe's work that this project has found reflected in the contemporary practices of organizing in spaces and technologies which appear to be so deracialised and universal (particularly the application). The postcolony is in many ways an antithesis to the de-racialised practices of Agile at the BTC, an unwelcome history that the BTC is trying to forget. . However, I argue here that the postcolony is very much at work at the BTC, an ambiguous dead and living world all at once, an imperialist ruins of empire (Stoler, 2010), where we find practices of organising in the era of the contemporary, and the organizations of the contemporary, that remain distinctly neo-colonial, and which we explore in this project as the 'conjuring up of dead spirits' to paraphrase Mbembe (2017). Many of the ethnographic encounters at the BTC were found to echo colonial relations of power, whether those were the bank's former colonial relationships to South Africa or India (two important technology 'hubs' for the bank), or an ambivalence to the current working conditions or experiences of workers at the BTC who had come to the UK from former British colonies. The time of the colony was found to still cast a shadow, neither dead nor alive but still present in how the senior leadership of this bank were designing strategies for the future. Just as Mbembe has argued that myth makes up order and time in the postcolony (1992, 1996, 2008), so this project has found time and experience of being at the BTC, of working under its work methodologies of Agile and its re-branding from a bank to an app, to be intimately entwined with the colonial myths of the bank's past. Postcolony then, as a contemporary phenomenon for researching organizations using postcolonial methodologies and sensitivities, has led this project to a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony,* to help explain the ethnographic encounters at the BTC, a contemporary banking organization that is no longer a 'Colonial Bank' of the British Empire, but which continues to be influenced by this colonising history. Mbembe's concept is utilised here as an epistemological framework, and will also inform and help unpack the language of war and violence we find to be so prominent at the BTC in the next chapter.

Phenomenol Postcolony

O'Halloran (2016) has called Achille Mbembe's seminal work *On the Postcolony* (2001) 'a phenomenological experiment through prose and poetic license' (p.761). This is one of the reasons that the postcolony concept spoke to this project, offering a vehicle for analysis that works in Prasad's words 'against the grain' (2012) of mainstream organization and management scholarship, one that enables thinking in new directions for ethnographers 'studying up' (Nader, 1969 – such as in the context of the BTC where highly skilled professionals were studied by an early career researcher in a Western country) and attempting to marry postcolonial analysis with the time and experience of an interpretive ethnographic present, in the doing and writing of fieldwork. A phenomenological focus allows Mbembe to explore the psychic and emotional (as well as physical) harm that colonial structures of power have inflicted through generations, carried through the geographic and institutional constitution of violence as an ordering of life (2001, p.174). In Mbembe's terms, 'Colonial violence was…a *phenomenol* violence', (emphasis in original, 2017, p.164), one which is being fully unpacked, felt and recorded in the aftermath of the colony; in the *post*colony where such violence still exists.

In attempting an ethnographic writing that may represent this phenomenol legacy of colonial organising and which goes against the grain of mainstream tendencies in anthropology and organization, this project is also calling upon the histories of Harrison's work (1993) in 'writing against the grain' of Western histories of critique and storytelling, instead finding an anthropological voice for de-colonial objectives. Harrison argued in the 1990s that anthropology was at a turning point in late capitalism, and an ideal of 'Westerners and non-Westerners, men and women, class-privileged and class-oppressed' engaging in writing culture that 'no longer objectifies, appropriates or nativizes ethnographic Others' (p.402) was possible by opening up practices of anthropology to de-colonial methods and epistemes, finding ways to write that may deconstruct colonial organization under this phase of capitalism. Stoler's work also speaks to this cause via her concern with the ordering of colonial lives and exploring what she calls watermarks in colonial history (2010, p.8). These are scars which cannot be erased, which have set certain bodies and subjectivities in opposition to or categorised apart from colonial power in their embodied-ness. Stoler's account of 'mixed

bloods' born in the Netherlands Indies during the Dutch control of colonies such as Indonesia and the attempts to conceal or diminish their existence by colonial record keeping - as to come from both a history of empire and oppression was 'a category that neither color nor race could readily or reliably delimit or contain' (2010, p.7) - demonstrates a type of colonial organization which aims at reducing complexity and nuance. Race is essentialised into Blackness and Whiteness, as Mbembe discusses throughout his corpus.

Stoler's water marks are 'indelibly inscribed in past and present' (Ibid), but they are able to achieve post-colonial power in a revisionist, ethnographic history of archives and artefacts of colonialism, one that Stoler reveals appears when the grain is rough not smooth, when the fictions and paradoxes of colonial rule are challenged with the surprises of lived realities recorded in organizational writing. This is work that reveals 'not what colonial agents knew, but what happened when what they thought they knew they found they did not.' (2010, p.1). Such ethnographic work along and against the grain of the mainstream (colonialism, capitalism, writing and organization) helps anchor this project in a rich field of post-colonial ethnography research that Mbembe's contribution of postcolony is waiting to be written into. This project does its part to bring these two worlds together, making explicit some of the capacity the postcolony and Mbembe's work more broadly has to contribute to current anthropological debates on ethnographic responsibility in an era of colonial history for the methodology, and also those in business, management and organization studies, where postcolonial voices and perspectives are still on the periphery of concern. Western discourses of management and organisation are, as Prasad has pointed out, 'interdependent and mutually reinforcing networks…deeply complicit with the discourse of Western colonialism' (2012, p.21), suffering from a lack of work that attempts to know organization 'against the grain'. There is work to be done to move on from the neo-colonial practices of much work in both organization studies and anthropology (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001), and it is argued here that the concept of postcolony can be a tool for the grounded empirical work to begin to help in achieving this.

Mbembe's work attempts a new understanding of temporality, embodiment, spatiality and subjectivity via the fantastical and phantasmic (2001, 2002, 2017) classifications of space, time and experience. Mbembe utilises an analysis of 'African history as a forum for the

disruption and decon-struction of key elements such as time, space, power, and violence' reconstructing them on a terrain he calls the postcolony (Terreta, 2002, p.162). Mbembe has been criticised for failing to include a wider geography of critique and experience of post-colonial contexts other than Africa into his corpus, and for side-stepping the anti-essentialising work of post-colonial scholars in these contexts. For example, Wickramasinghe has argued that South Asian critiques 'similar to that of Mbembe's critique of the essentialising of identities in Africa were under way as early as in the 1980s' (2001, p.42-43). However, Mbembe's project can be understood as an engagement with the idea of a postcolony that not only structures time and subjectivity in (post-colonial) Africa, but which does this on a global scale, beyond the border of identities such as the nation state and physical geography. In fact, his problematisation of the category of Blackness (and Whiteness), reflects his commitment to deconstruction of the postcolony as an exclusive form of organization and a call to starting afresh against a 'politics of assimilation' that aestheticises and assimilates difference (2002, p.249). If, in Isabelle Stenger's words, the body of philosophy is the work of dead white males (2007), then the postcolony is a project that aims to make their deadness explicit, to be a 'thanatographic perspective' (Weate, 2003, p.34) for white, Western, masculine episteme. Mbembe is doing nothing less than revolutionising postcolonial theory some have argued, as his use of the noun *postcolony* transforms a school of scholarly introspection (postcolonial theory) into a lived reality and 'political analysis of the contemporary' (Pouchepadass, 2006, p.188). The absence of any attention to contemporary implications of colonisation and its aftermath, Western empire building or colonising modes of organising in organizations today from mainstream studies of business, management and organization speaks of a silent lack in organizational epistemologies as we have discussed in chapter 1. Work from a critical perspective which has attempted to discuss the zeitgeist experience of post-colonial contexts and organizations includes Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee's 2018 paper on markets and violence, spelling out current links to past regimes of violent exploitation via listing a great number of countries which are seeing ongoing struggles between local community groups and corporations in the business of extraction (of materials, oil and minerals):

'It is no coincidence that nearly all of these countries are former colonies. It is also no coincidence that the companies involved in these conflicts are headquartered in

countries that were colonial rulers. While the era of direct colonial rule is over neocolonial modes of dispossession continue in the postcolonial world' (Banerjee, 2018, p.4).

As Banerjee has noted, the colony may have become part of the (silent) past of organization, but colonising modes of organising life, capital and labour remain at the foreground of (often violent) experiences of people's living in post-colonial contexts (former colonies), when they come into opposition with the forces of global capitalism, such as corporate interests from the global North. This thesis also makes the case that these colonising modes of organization abound in Western contexts of organizations such as banks, and are therefore powerful and pervasive historical forces that inflict harm onto collective bodies (Mbembe, 2002, p.259); these are the lived experiences of time, space and experience for those working in organizations. From this perspective, critics of Mbembe's *on the postcolony* who argue that: 'it may be about time to close the chapter on colonialism and turn attention once again to the problematic of capitalism' (Dirlik, 2002, p.614), would be wise to look carefully at contemporary relations between capitalism and colonial legacies, such as those Banerjee discusses, as they are, in many respects, one and the same power, or each a moment in the constitution of racism and Blackness (an oppositional category Mbembe uses to the universalism of Whiteness and the Enlightenment project of knowledge building from Europe outwards across the world (2017, p.4)). The colony may no longer exist in name, its power of signification under Empire vanished with the collapse of empires such as Britain, however, as we have seen from ethnographic accounts of how Agile stratifies space and enforces neo-colonial rules on the behaviour, seating arrangements and access to the workplace of workers from former British colonies and the inequalities of these when compared to their white, British 'Scrum Masters' at the BTC in 2014-2016, colonising modes of organizing live on, in fact thriving in the 'New World' of globalised, flexible capital and labour. These legacies of organising from colonial history and predating them, continue to structure what Faria et al. have described as the 'market empire' that capitalism represents, that which causes a 'structural meta-crisis of the "civilizing" project of modernity and its colonial condition' (2010, p.102). Mbembe argues that contemporary politics and organization is at a third critical moment for the constitution of Blackness and Race as categories for organizing (the previous two being slavery and colonialism), this third moment, the moment of the contemporary,

describes the conditions at the BTC and the context the former Colonial Bank exists and acts within. Mbembe describes this third moment as:

> '…one marked by the globalisation of markets, the privatisation of the world under the aegis of neoliberalism, and the increasing imbrication of financial markets, the postimperial military complex, and electronic and digital technologies. By "neoliberalism", I mean a phase in the history of humanity dominated by the industries of the Silicon Valley and digital technology. […] the frenzied codification of social life according to norms, categories and numbers; and various operations of abstraction that claim to rationalise the world on the basis of corporate logic.' (2017, p.3).

This experience is one I found recurring in the ethnographic encounters of the BTC, an application of Mbembe's idea brought to life in the proliferation of the technology entrepreneur, the 'Hackahon', the 'sprint' and the ways these working practices structured time and space at the BTC, a reflection of postcolony for the neoliberal age, but not only that, the postcolony at work at the BTC was a reflection of how these kinds of contemporary organizing could be traced back to colonial power structures (as we discussed with the history of Agile and the 'Scrum' way of working from British public school rugby teams in chapter 3).

Phallic Postcolony

As the masculine image of the technology entrepreneur (Allen and Truman, 1993; Berg, 1997; Carr, 2000; Acker, 1990; Gamber, 1998; Green and Cohen, 1995; Mirchandani, 1999; Ahl, 2002; Bruni *et al*., 2004a, 2004b; Lewis, 2006; Lewis and Simpson, 2011) found repeated in different spaces and signs at the BTC testifies to (and the huge brand image of an attractive woman choosing shoes at the BTC), Mbembe's embodied postcolony also has its history in the signification of the phallus, the representation of philosophy's masculine subject. According to feminist philosophers of the body such as Luce Irigaray, the 'phallic assertions' (Irigaray, 1985, p.141) of language, along with colonial

assertions of language (such as that found at the BTC in its 'Scrum Masters', 'Product Owners', 'Team Leader', and 'Presidents') turn the subject of otherness, the non-man (woman or the non-white man), that person characterised and racialized by difference to Whiteness) into that other, which is organized into a mirror of the 'I' of the masculine, yet hollow and negative (Ibid). Any bodies which fail to conform to the fast, light Whiteness of the Agile vision were chastised at BTC spaces such as the CoLab, as we saw in the previous chapter in Darrell's case: 'Darrell you're making a scene', was the response to his refusal to conform to Agile work practices and their white, colonial legacies. In Mbembe's thought, the same 'I' of the white European coloniser still marks the otherness of African subjectivity in contemporary times, as the phallus retains its power in naturalised images (for instance, the brands at the BTC which included rockets and phallic corporate building towers):

> *'In many ways, the form of domination imposed during both the slave trade and colonialism in Africa could be called phallic. During the colonial era and its aftermath, phallic domination has been all the more strategic in power relationships, not only because it is based on a mobilization of the subjective foundations of masculinity and femininity but also because it has direct, close connections with the general economy of sexuality. In fact, the phallus has been the focus of ways of constructing masculinity and power.* (Mbembe, 2001, p.13).

The deconstruction of the phallus is then integral to the project of deconstructing the categories of Race, Whiteness and Blackness for Mbembe, following in the tradition of Derrida's 'Phallogocentrism' (1978), and Haraway's problematisation of 'black and white' dualisms in the social ordering of peoples and other living beings (1991). Mbembe is writing from a postcolonial perspective, specifically an African postcolonial perspective, in order to find possibilities for transcending a limited Western and phallocentric episteme of philosophy for his project, and for de-centering subjectivity within masculine, Eurocentric discourse. Mbembe has argued that there must be an intellectual interlocking with the issue of material power for this to be achieved, which for Mbembe comes from an attention to discourse and lived experience. The phallocentric nature of Western discourse comes from the colonial encounter for Mbembe, and a deconstruction of the Christian mission to the colonies, which served up white monotheism as a power that is 'fantastic, derived from a theological,

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mythical…unitary truth' (O'Halloran, 2016, p.763), is necessary to achieve this. The significant metaphor of 'God's Phallus' pervades *On the Postcolony* as a symbol of that power, of an ontology incompatible with postcolonial subjectivities (those which are 'other' to white episteme), and which sexualises and mythologises colonisation (Mbembe, 2015, p.217). Mbembe implicates the God of Christian colonising missions to Africa as absorbing the worlds this God finds through 'magical excitement' (Mbembe, 2015, p.222), a sexualised act of 'the destruction of worlds' (2015, p.228), a triumph of death over life – no embodied reality existing apart from God's own body, and the subjectivity of white European colonisation. This radical and fascinating thesis of psychic and embodied history of phallic postcolony calls Christianity a force for implementing a 'universal empire' (Mbembe, 2001, p.227) of European Whiteness on spaces which are other, spaces which have been subject to the colonisation and enslavement of Western empire and its phallic, monotheistic subjectivities and ideas of time. As we have discussed in chapter 2, the brands we find at the BTC declaring the 'values' of 'Stewardship' where business should be 'good for local workers and for us', were particularly reminiscent of a colonising mission; one the descendent of the Colonial bank continued into 2016. Mbembe also argues that power in the postcolony is a mimicry of the mythical truth of monotheism, an oppression based on 'phantasm…in rubbing the two imaginaries of death and sexuality together, rubbing them constantly until they burst into fire.' (Mbembe, 2001, p.231). In terms of contemporary organization, the phallic postcolony represents those spaces that continue to be subjected to masculine powers of domination such as the brand of the Silicon Valley entrepreneur. These brands fall into the category of those which Mbembe, channelling Frantz Fanon, has called figures that 'the possibility for the emergence of an autonomous subject' (2017, p.107). The phallic power and legacy of Christian colonisation is therefore a continuing power in the postcolony for Mbembe, and time continues to be colonised as a universal, White apparatus of power under capitalism. There is a repetition of the phallic colonisation that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the organizational practices of this bank in the twenty first, particularly in the drive to 'appify' banking products and the bank's brand itself, for each iteration of a new banking app to succeed in the fast changing rankings of the Apple and Android app stores. 'There is no identity without temporality' Mbembe posits (2002, p.265), and in the postcolony, 'temporality is colonised by the desire for short term consumption' (p.271), (such as the consumption of sprints in Agile or the consumption of 'appified' brands by many at the

BTC and its customers) which does not allow for any subjectivity beyond the boundaries of organization that colonises time in this way.

Temporal and embodied Postcolony

Time is a vital component of postcolony, with temporality defining what it means to be a subject for Mbembe (2001, p.15), specifically, for the context of 1990s Cameroon about which Mbembe was writing *On the Postcolony*. African time and subjectivity is essentialised and flattened into 'the very figure of the strange' (2001, p.3) or 'absolute otherness' (Ibid, p.2) in the postcolony, where time does not move to any future different to the past and present of colonialism, and which instead is reduced to the myths of Whiteness, the phallus, the Christian God. O'Halloran writes in his review of *On the postcolony* that:

> 'In such time, there is an ontological reduction of the past to a single experience; or, rather, a collection of experiences understood from the single perspective of European renaissance, exploration, conquest […] Mbembe critiques thought that only moves within the constrictions of a particular past. It is a solemnized, essential, and timeless past.' (2016, p.762).

Building on the conclusions of chapter 3 which suggested precarity was a defining feature of the postcolony, and where the strict structure of time for the 'feature factory' (made up of contract workers from former British colonies such as India and Africa) was ordered into sprints, stand-up meetings and collective lunchbreaks, we can see a very specific kind of time being created at the BTC in 'Agile' spaces. In the Co-Lab for example, each task and time period of the feature factory could be tracked and traced, and saw members in the feature factory teams either rebel against this colonising of their time into Agile time, or attempt to internalise the 'happy smiley faces' of the Agile 'glad' board – an artefact and representation of the things Agile had done well for the Cheque Imaging Project.

The implications of this for Mbembe's work is an extension of his 'myths of violence', of history and of the present time period (which is made up from these myths for Mbembe),

from specific post-colonial African contexts to much broader ones, such as a UK bank operating in a global market for labour and technology commodities. The myths at play at the BTC are very much those we find Mbembe engaging with in his work, a phenomological and embodied experience of post-colonial life – and in this case work at the BTC and its global hubs spread across the world.

Mbembe argues that the postcolony is an embodied language through which people live, as well as the Zeitgeist of Africa in the late 20th and early 21st century:

'…constituted by a set of material practices, signs, figures, superstitions, images, and fictions that, because they are available to individuals' imagination and intelligence and actually experienced, form what might be called "languages of life." This "life world" is not only the field where individuals' existence unfolds in practice; it is where they exercise existence—that is, live their lives out and confront the very forms of their death' (2001, p.15).

This life (and death) world of the postcolony is for Mbembe a lived present, an 'experience of a time' (p.16), where the temporality of the present denotes an absence of the remembered past (of memory for Mbembe, 2002) and the anticipated future. Mbembe has described empire as an experience that continues to structure the future of organizations such as the nation State, by vanishing lived experience outside its boundaries and 'transforming the real into fiction, and fiction into the real' (2002, p.4-5). This fiction is that of a universal past of the Christian mission and colonial power which has been described, which haunts the present, for those subjects of postcolony organised by its structures. This is also 'the *time of entanglement'* (2001, p.16, emphasis in original), as the fictions of colonising epistemes form part of the 'thick and multifold 'entanglement' that Mbembe identifies as the post-colonial experience (O'Halloran, 2016, p.761). This emphasis on entanglement is central to our understanding of postcolony as an embodied mode of analysis, and also speaks to the project of Pullen and Rhodes to find new ways of approaching phenomenological approaches with otherness in organization (2014). Mbembe argues that the human, the creature living out its present, is like the continent of Africa in its inability (and refusal) to be reduced to myth and linear narratives of being in the world. To live and work in the postcolony therefore confronts

us with the problematic nature of time and history as conceived as linear progressions: 'As an age, the postcolony encloses multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an *entanglement'* (Mbembe, 2001, p. 14, emphasis in original). This nod to Henri Bergson's Duree is not however, 'the time of the true romantic' or 'disbelief with the realities of life' (Lewis, 1993, p.8), as critics of Bergson's 'pure heterogeneity' of time have argued (Ibid). Rather, Mbembe's time of entanglement is both political and grounded in the experience of contemporary Africa and the categories he problematises as Blackness and Race. Mbembe critiques post-structuralist philosophies (and post post-structuralist ones such as Deleuzian thinking) as being too concerned with hybridity, fluidity and negotiation (2001, p.5), Mbembe preferring a phenomenological yet grounded approach to time: the liveliness of the human and the knowledge of lived experience as able to create change to the time of the present, to create meaning in the world that goes beyond the static myths of the postcolony, and also beyond the war and violence of its colonial lineage. This is what makes the postcolony a fundamentally embodied concept and epistemological tool, as well as a specific temporality and subjectivity.

We may find experience becoming entangled in time and identity to create postcolony in organizations such as the BTC. We can unpack this via the story of one technologist from the Philippines, who had lunch with me one day after I attended an event to improve speaking and presentation skills with her after hours at the BTC (she would attend this session each month, along with several contractors from India and some white British permanent employees, who were all encouraged via the internal intranet and collective emails to attend and improve their speaking skills if they were shy or needed to improve their English). As we ate together she told me:

> 'I wanted to find work in my country, but it's too hard, too messy [the economy and work opportunities in the Philippines]. So I stay here. It's ok, but I miss home, it's not easy at all…[even though] I've been here for several years.'

She had however, carved out a space for herself at the BTC, and was well known and liked by many of her colleagues for her jokes and strong technical skills, as well as being known by her race: 'they all know me…there's only one Filipino here!' This material effect and experience of displacement, and of making a new life and identity at work in the UK from the Philippines,

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was clearly a difficult history for this young female technologist to carry, one that could not be erased by the fast, iterative product development at the BTC that expected her to be 'Agile', excitedly building the future of the UK bank as if her body did not carry a different history of Filipino economic and political struggle and displacement. The brands and on-site events run by CRES that staff were encouraged to attend and internalise also failed to capture her experience, and this technologist was able to create a different identity, one that could not be reduced to the myths and linear narratives (Mbembe, 2001) contained within the brands and work methodologies of the BTC.

I would often see this Technologist working and eating alone at the BTC over the two years I visited the site, carrying the physical discontinuity of her identities as the only Filipino in her team (and the only Filipino working at the BTC that she knew of), and a very capable and passionate Technologist working on complex 'technology migration' programmes, which saw old technical systems discontinued and new ones set up on the bank's internal servers. This work was a displacement of different kinds of bodies, Burrell's networked computer architecture (1988) that represented the bank's years of pre-appified technologies, being replaced by the app, the 'bank of the future'.. The feelings of displacement and negotiation of this future that our Filipino Technologist had to deal with as she worked at the BTC was, we may argue, an example of the embodied experience of postcolony at the BTC.

Postcolony in space

The embodied experience of the spatiality of postcolony is essential for Mbembe, as it is the human subject who navigates the displacement of time and space on the body, those which Mbembe sees as characteristic of the postcolonial experience ('In the case of the postcolony, to postulate the existence of a "before" and an "after" of colonization could not exhaust the problem of the relationship between temporality and subjectivity' (2001, p.15)). The material, embodied subject is at the centre of postcolony:

> *'…the subject emerging, acting effectively, withdrawing, or being removed in the act and context of displacement refers to two things: first, to the forms of "living in the concrete world," then to the subjective forms that make possible any validation of its*

contents—that objectify it….what is "distinctive" or "particular" to his/her present real world—is first a subject who has an experience of "living in the concrete world." She/he is a subject of experience and a validating subject, not only in the sense that she/he is a conscious existence or has a perceptive consciousness of things, but to the extent that his/her "living in the concrete world" involves, and is evaluated by, his/her eyes, ears, mouth—in short, his/her flesh, his/her body.' (2001, p.17).

Mbembe's reading of Hegel can be seen as important here, as the self-consciousness of the subject experiencing the world is foregrounded, following Hegel. Mbembe also draws on Hegel's idea of the 'fetish' as an artefact expressing colonial mastership, specifically in a religious context in Africa, where Mbembe posits that: 'reality becomes enclosed within a pre-ordained madness' (2001, p.178) in the closed consciousness of colonial existence, in the experience of postcolony. The embodied nature of Mbembe's time of the present has implications for epistemology and subjectivity in the postcolony; namely, to show that Western modes of episteme such as colonisation rely on the static fiction that it cannot be deconstructed, that it is a truth that embodied experience must ratify. In fact, Mbembe shows us that lived experience can change, reverse or amend time and therefore move beyond Western means of knowledge construction:

'…this time is not irreversible. All sharp breaks, sudden and abrupt outbursts of volatility, it cannot be forced into any simplistic model and calls into question the hypothesis of stability and rupture.' (Mbembe, 2001, p.16).

The entanglement of time - of past, future and experience in the present, is also entangled with the entanglement of 'the Other' in postcolony. This phenomenological perspective on time and subjectivity is in the tradition of Merleau Ponty's work, where human experience cannot be separated from the corporeal body (1962), and embodied experience is interconnected with the 'flesh-of-the-world' (1968). In terms of the world of organization studies, Dale and Latham have made some important contributions to such thinking with their work on entanglement (2015). Dale and Latham and other scholars of organization and management in the material turn are primarily concerned with the entanglements of human and non-human materialites (following from Karen Barad's work (2007)): 'humanity is only

humanity in the particular ways that it is through our relationship with a multitude of materialities' (Dale and Latham, 2015, p.170). However, we can still find this useful for thinking with post-colonial concepts such as postcolony and attempting research 'against the grain' of mainstream epistemes and methods, as Dale and Latham cite Parker's argument that the 'I and Other' relation results in a 'moral ordering', where distinctions are drawn between 'good people, bad people and non-people'. (Parker, 2000, p.84). We can find the results of such a historical moral ordering in the first pages of *On the Postcolony*:

'...here is a principle of language and classificatory systems in which *to differ* from something or somebody is not simply *not to be like* (in the sense of being non-identical or being-other); it is also *not to be at all* (nonbeing). More, it is *being nothing* (nothingness)[...]these systems of reading the world attempt to exercise an authority of a particular type, assigning Africa to a special unreality such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished, and, in its essence, in opposition to what is: the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all.' (Mbembe, 2001, p.4).

The ethical implications of entanglements in the postcolony can therefore be seen to begin with and be reproduced by how the I and the Other are classified. For Mbembe, this phenomenological question is also subject to Western-centric mythologies and the white, male, European 'I' of colonisation:

'...the experience of the Other, or the problem of the "I" of others and of human beings we perceive as foreign to us, has almost always posed virtually insurmountable difficulties to the Western philosophical and political tradition. Whether dealing with Africa or with other non-European worlds, this tradition long denied the existence of any "self" but its own.' (2001, p.2).

Contributions from organization studies to the ethical dilemmas posed by embodied perspectives and practices of knowing and doing in the world include Dale and Latham's work on the shared corporeality of bodies living in the world as essential to recognising and responding to the Other: 'There is a particularity of differences within our entanglements –

and at the same time it is that very inter-corporeality that allows the possibility of recognition of, response to and responsibility for the other.' (2015, p.171). Pullen and Rhodes have also contributed to these debates, developing the idea of a corporeal ethics for organization (2014(a)), which 'manifests in resisting those forms of organizing that close down difference and enact oppression.' (p.783). By following the philosopher Rosalyn Diprose (2002), Pullen and Rhodes argue that 'grappling with the lived, sensed and felt experience of inter-personal ethical engagement' is what those who run and work in organizations can begin to do to make a material difference to conditions of inequality. Pullen and Rhodes call attention to 'the origin of ethics in living breathing bodies' (p.787), rather than the organizational discourses and artefacts which pay lip service to ethics and justice but which fail to turn representation into action in and with the body. There is a selflessness at the heart of corporeal ethics where 'the focus is on the politically engaged affective body that responds openly to others without always considering the self first.' (p.788). Pullen and Rhodes argue that what must be resisted in order to have a corporal, ethical organization is the limitation of 'the Other' by normalised discourse and familiar practices. 'Intercorporeal generosity' then becomes enacted, once difference is supported in resisting normative standards of categorisation (2014(a)). Faria et al. have also challenged organization studies to 'cultivate an-other thinking based on inclusive, open and plural dialogues and discussions between peoples and communities to jointly imagine a decolonized world' (Faria et al., 2010, p.102). This ethnical de-colonising, or de-centering of normative categories such as Whiteness and Blackness and Race, is also the ethics Mbembe works with for his project, namely a 'stepping away from the myths of violence [...] and writing new narratives with positive trajectories.' (O'Halloran, 2016, p.762). What the postcolony requires is 'radical, emancipatory, subjectivity formation, which necessarily means doing violence to hegemonic myths.' (Ibid, p.765). In terms of whether this project was able to work with such a possibility in the ethnography at the BTC, the 'accountability trail' (Altheie and Johnson, 1994) that I must leave behind me as a researcher has demonstrated the difficulties in realising this radical alternative that postcolony may require, according to Mbembe. In my own silencing of members of the feature factory teams when I approached them, however unintentional, my inability to gain full access of accounts from those working in Agile, indicates a failing of the ethnographic method as well as this particular researcher's colonising presence and significations. In witnessing Darrell's rebellion against Agile, a key ethnographic moment had occurred for me, where difference to the

norms of the white, male technology entrepreneur was presented (rather than the 'we are very happy, thank you ma'am' that was much more common), and the resistance to this political move by other members of Darrell's Agile team demonstrated how far from Mbembe's 'radical, emancipatory, subjectivity formation' work in Agile was at the BTC. Mbembe proposes that 'for those whose share of humanity was stolen at a given moment in history, the recovery of that share often happens in part through the proclamation of difference' (2017, p.183), however, ethnography in this project has been found wanting in its ability to transcend the coloniality of its own history; in its default to reproduce dominations of knowing, privileged researcher and research subject gagged by Western circuits of knowledge that consume the experience of traditionally more marginalised groups. Mbembe also goes on to insist that 'The torment of nonfulfillment and incompleteness, the labyrinthine entanglement, are in no way specifically African features.' (Ibid, p.8), and so we can understand postcolony as a space and time of entanglement that appears in other contexts where colonial histories have left their mark (or Stoler's watermarks, 2010), even, in the case of this thesis, a Global Bank Technology Centre in the UK. This can then be helpful in seeking to understand specific entanglements that have occurred during fieldwork, and how these are constructed and reproduced out of 'I and Other' distinctions.

Failure to materialise

Mbembe has criticised disciplines such as post-structuralist social and feminist theory, as well as anthropology for neglecting the material effects of colonialist legacies on post-colonial contexts: 'On the pretext of avoiding single-factor explanations of domination, these disciplines have reduced the complex phenomena of the state and power to "discourses" and "representations," forgetting that discourses and representations have materiality.' (2001, p.5). The same argument can be applied to mainstream treatments of materiality from studies of business, management and organization (for example Elsbach et al., 2017; Puroila et al., 2016; Wood, 2013; Leonardi and Barley, 2008), and from much of the school of Critical Management Studies, which, as we have discovered in chapter 1, fails to take up the mantle of research via embodied post or de-colonial approaches. CMS is found to have a tendency to

privilege discourse and representational modes of analysis, lacking in its corpus on embodied knowledge or the histories of colonies that are so central to post and de-colonial work. This project has attempted to think ethnographically 'against the grain' about the discourses of war and violence at the BTC, which we will explore in the next chapter, emphasising the phenomenological dimension to their significations. Materiality as constituting everyday life (Orlikowski, 2007), has been much more fully explored by social science scholars of technology and philosophy outside organization studies (Barad, 2003; 2007 Latour, 2005, 2012; Suchman, 2007, 2012, 2016), but this work also misses opportunities to speak to post-colonial and de-colonial thinkers of systems of organizing, such as Mbembe and his postcolony project.

This material nature of the postcolony is closely linked to its formation in physical space, as 'Imperialism and capitalism have long been founded on the celebration of existing, positive spatial forms' (Gordillo, 2014, p.246), and global corporations such as the BTC make efforts to carefully create and cultivate their spaces of work. At the BTC we have described the celebrated space of the CoLab in detail in the previous chapter, and there were also other spaces newly renovated, or planned renovations, by CRES, given or to be given formal rituals to emphasise their positivity, as within these spaces the future of the bank had been or would be built, a de-materialised future mediated by app technologies. Gordillo's anthropological project has sought to understand the ruins of imperialism from within the physical spaces of former colonies, which he finds are often interpreted by peoples who live and work in communities which house ruins as the rubble of destruction and violence inflicted by Empire and imperial powers (2013). Ann Stoler's work on 'imperial ruination', equally influential for cultural anthropology and ethnography, has defined this process as 'the ongoing, degrading domination that lays waste to certain people's relations and things', and is signposted by 'technologies of imperial rule' (Stoler, 2008, p.1). The positive spatialisation of power that resonates from regimes of imperialism and Empire and 'the potential of resistance to it to bound and 'void'' - in Gordillo's words, that space (p.247), is argued here to define the spatial systems and time of postcolony, particularly the postcolony we find at the BTC. The 'back to the past' nature of wotk in the Mini-apps team, and the stasis of Agile work at the CoLab that fails to materialise a future for the technologists working in this way and for the bank's app products, along with the cynicism and opposition that several members of different teams at

the BTC announced when I discussed the CRES site make-overs with them, represented this postcolony of space. These can also be conceived as examples of Stoler's 'imperial formations' (2008), spaces defined by racialized relations of allocations and appropriations (Stoler, 2008), when we take into account the treatment of the feature factory teams in the CoLab and the Indian Technologist in the Mini-Apps team. One team 'Vice President' at the BTC, (the name for an assistant manager inherited from a time when an American senior leadership team had been running the bank in the early 2000s), tells me of the renovations to the corporate spaces around them:

> 'It's so false. They put a lick of paint…new tables at the café. Why don't they give some of the guys here a bonus instead? Morale is so low.'

This embodied a frustration at and rejection of the re-branding exercise CRES had undertaken to showcase 'our campus style site, a flagship model for the ways the bank is moving to work in the future' according to Kitty, or as what those who witnessed the exercise described as re-painting a tired stairwell and ordering in some plastic blue tables. These decorations can be interpreted as Stoler's imperialist technologies or formations, becoming out of their context and the response to them (rather than an artefact of Empire of colonial rule, fixed in a time of the past). They also signalled and stratified difference and privilege, with teams based at the BTC's 'global hubs' in India and Lithuania for example, not being afforded the space renovations of teams at the BTC, with one technologist telling me that her team in Lithuania struggled on with limited conferencing call facilities and basic office equipment such as desks and chairs that were 'not up to scratch'. The power and potential to stir controversy when I spoke to BTC staff about the BTC renovations continued as spaces were renovated, opened, and others closed and shut away during 2014-2016, the latter now off limits and irrelevant to the 'bank of the future', mirroring those spaces being sold off in South Africa at the end of this ethnography, as the bank detached its brand and money from this space, leaving its own ruins behind. Mbembe has pointed out that new imperial practices are emerging (2017, p.4), tied to the tendency to universalise Blackness and Black experience, and the imperial practices of the former Colonial Bank can be included in his characterisation. Excluding workers who were on short term employment contacts (a large majority of whom were non-white and non-British) from liminal spaces of a contemporary organization in the UK that pronounces its 'values' across branded objects at the site, forcing these workers to travel into

the site together on a convoy or park in precarious, potentially dangerous spots close to a dark and busy A-road, as well as the neo-colonial language used in 2016 to describe the bank's business in former colonies such as South Africa: 'it's shocking really, they're all corrupt…we had to step in and sort them out', were practices that can said to represent a new imperialism, or in other words, a postcolony, where otherness and difference – or in Mbembe's terms, Blackness - is marked out and against the BTC's positive spaces of fast, light accelerated technology – or whiteness – is the colony re-imagined in 2014-2016.

Final thoughts

Mbembe has stressed, echoing Fanon (1959), that postcolonial thinking:

> 'is not an end in itself. It is carried out with the aim of paving the way for an enquiry into the possibility of a politics of the future, of mutuality and of the common. The prerequisite for such a politics is the recognition of the Other as a fellow human.' (Mbembe, 2008).

Mbembe is arguing that in order to enact a post-colonial world, the categories of Race, specifically Whiteness and Blackness (in its affiliation with Western discourses in and about Africa) as its negative, as 'supreme receptacle of the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of "absence," "lack," and "non-being," of identity and difference, of negativeness—in short, of nothingness'. (2001, p.4), must be totally deconstructed. The rejection of such colonising regimes of organising life would, it is argued here, lead to the end of the *post*-colony. The end of a temporal, spatial and phenomenological experience of continued legacy and violence of the colony, of empires that have technically died long ago, but which cling on in a twilight afterlife, eerily glowing in the shadow of their former glories, to paraphrase Kwasi Kwarteng (2011).

Organization at the BTC is argued here to be a postcolony; still shaped and continuously formed by the histories of the Colonial Bank, its successes in penetrating markets in former British colonies, as well as its failures to maintain these spaces too (the South African departure and legacy technologies were found to be a significant 'problem' at the BTC throughout 2016, as the bank sought to detach itself (once again, following it's departure in 1986) from this soon to be former colony). In telling stories of the postcolony we find

ethnographic experiences of organisation may be one response to new practices of imperialism in the cotemporary world that Mbembe has warned of. These are reproduced by contemporary organizations, and require a phenomenological approach to entangled time and intercorporeal exchanges for organization studies to take an ethical step towards deconstructing postcolony in dominant, colonising modes of organizing (Pullen and Rhodes, 2014).We see examples of these colonising organizational forms in the 'bank of the future' branding and the drive to appify the bank, and in the proliferation and influence of Agile as a way of working at the BTC.

The destabilising of epistemological colonialism has been started in revolutionary fashion by the work of Achille Mbembe (1992, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2016, 2017), vital for this project, as well as by those giants of post-colonial theory such as Said (1993), Bhabha (1984), Fanon (1952, 1959, 1961) and Spivak (1985, 1987). The destabilising of colonising regimes of organization from an embodiment and materiality perspective has also been started in earnest (Carlile et al. 2013; Jones, 2013; Parker, 2000; Dale, 2001; Dale and Latham, 2015). What this project can contribute to debates regarding post-colonial organization and material experience is a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony,* argued to structure time, material space and experience at the BTC. The next chapter will further add to this detailed explanation of postcolony, exploring metaphors, discourses and practices of war in the organisation of the BTC, specifically at one building, 'The Tower'.

Chapter 5

War at The Tower

This chapter follows our detailed discussion of this project's dialogue with Mbembe's postcolony and the implications of this for understanding organization at the BTC in chapter 4, and here we seek to explicate one aspect of postcolony: the normalisation and internalisation of war and violence as a language, discourse, and symbolic order of things, which was found to be pervasive at the BTC. This effect became ethnographically visible via the words used to tell stories by staff at the BTC, their attitudes to the 'global hubs' of India and Lithuania who carried out lower grade technology functions for the bank, and the working practices that all emerged at one building at the BTC during the time of this research: 'The Tower'. In this space, teams from 'Infrastructure Services' were working from 2014-2016 at 'keeping the lights on' - that is, at maintaining and decommissioning legacy technical systems that were currently being replaced by new ones based on applications (apps), and building essential middle layers of software that would enable customers to use new banking applications created in spaces such as the CoLab.

It is argued here that colonising regimes of work that make up the postcolony (Mbembe, 2001) are reproduced via the phallic metaphors of war found to be ubiquitous at the Tower. Languages of violence and metaphors such as the setting down of borders, lines of allegiance, and building battle trenches were found to be normalised for those teams of technologists working in The Tower, and these materialised into violent practices and norms, particularly targeted at the bank's foreign workers in developing countries ('global hubs'). The figure of the 'big dads' found at the BTC is also explored as a colonising agent in organization from a post-colonial perspective. The significance of war metaphors at the BTC is explored in this chapter as an overlapping intersectionality between phallocentrism and post-colonialism; there is a gap in current organization studies literature that addresses militaristic terminology and identities in organizations as more than strategy choices for competitive advantage (the position taken by almost all mainstream business and research literature on the subject). Rather, in the ethnographic accounts of spaces at the BTC such as 'the Tower' that follow

here, the history of war metaphors used at the BTC is traced to the colonial history of this bank and its current context as a global, formerly colonial organization, under threat from the forces of new technologies (appification) and loss of market share that we have discussed in chapter 2. A psychoanalytical and feminist lens is used to understand the continued centrism of phallic language and symbols, particularly those of war and violence, that I found to be ubiquitous, even shockingly so, at the Tower. The implications of these to a new post-colonial, intersectional understanding of the BTC is explicated in the conclusion.

War in organization studies

Research on the metaphors used to classify and describe organization is a well-established field (Weick 1979; Grant and Oswick 1996; Grant et al. 2004; Cornelissen 2005; Morgan, 2006; Putnam and Boys 2006), following the tradition of work started by Gareth Morgan in the early 1980s, when he posited that organization theory had become a prisoner of its own reliance on metaphor to explain the phenomena of research in organization (1980). Although the risk of the metaphor creating one-dimensional research data and taken-for-granted assumptions when taken too literally is a real one, particularly when the metaphor in question is one of war and violence, as Cornelissen et al. have pointed out, metaphors 'guide our perceptions and interpretations of reality and help us formulate our visions and goals' (2008, p.8), and the proliferation and ubiquity of metaphors of war that were experienced during this fieldwork in the space of 'The Tower' at the BTC, warrants some specific analysis, using these metaphors to help translate the phenomenological experiences of staff at the BTC. Metaphors of war have been discussed before in organization studies (Krause, 1995; Hannagan, 1998; Harry, 2001; Clemons and Santamaria, 2002; McKelvey, 2003; Hassard, 2003), and some such as Mutch have argued that 'The conventional use of military metaphor acts as a diversion away from a deeper consideration of the nature of contemporary organizations' (2006, p.763). However, this study aims to explore the metaphors of war in organization to try and understand what is being called postcolony at the Bank Technology Centre, the contemporary practices that reflect legacies of empire. There is also a gap in the literature exploring metaphors and practices of war in organizations such as global banks from a post-colonial perspective which this thesis aims to begin to redress.

It is not only the metaphors of war that have made their way into business and management parlance however; Sun Tzu's seminal military treatise 'The Art of War', which details practical principles of strategy for defeating 'the enemy' has also found a significant audience in business and management studies, and not only from a Chinese or Asian audience, but across Western canon of mainstream American journals too (Krause, 1996; Lee et al., 1998; Watson, 2007; McNeilly, 2012; Sheetz-Runkle, 2014). However, the link between these classic military practices and both colonial organizational history and post-colonial encounter for contemporary organization is an underexplored field this chapter aims to make a contribution to. Along with metaphors of war, the application of tactics for overcoming business challenges or increasing market share were intimately linked with such military methodologies at the BTC, as we will discuss in depth in this chapter.

As we have discussed in the previous chapter, postcolony in Mbembe's terms is a phenomenological and temporal project that structures the lives of many people in contemporary post-colonial contexts and organizations, and for Mbembe, war is a fundamental part of the lived experience of postcolony, as 'colonial right is necessarily the daughter of violence' (2005, p.18), and the legacies of the colony and its constituent regimes of war and empire continue to constitute the *post*colony in contemporary times. The militaristic images of war found at the BTC, and specifically in the spaces of 'The Tower', are argued to reflect colonising regimes of organization that transform the experience and time of work into that of warfare and battle, with embodied anxieties, frustrations and resistance as the impressions left by working in an organization at war. These regimes of work are also found to rest on the exploitation of global markets for the bank, including utilising cheap labour costs in developing countries. War in the postcolony, what Mbembe has called a 'song of sorrows' (2001), is found to be simultaneously reproduced and resisted by masculine, neo-colonial epistemologies (of war and conquest), which are part of normative discourse at the BTC. By exploring the ethnographic realities of life for the Middleware team and the Mainframe team, both situated in the Tower, we find war enunciated and translated into the material reality of work - via use of different colonial and military inspired metaphors as well as embodied practices of work. Here we may begin to see it is possible to reveal the ubiquitous nature of colonising discourses of organization in this preoccupation with war and violence at the BTC; what Dale has called the cut (2015) is here quite visible - an eradication

of bodies and languages of difference in organization, colonising all into the obedient and organized territory of masculinised body of war and power- one in constant battle for survival. We will conclude this chapter by considering the difficulties in overcoming the contemporary colonisation of organization in this context of the organization at perpetual war, seen through a post-colonial lens,, in preparation for the conclusion of this thesis.

Post-colonial approaches to management and organisation have seen a burgeoning of scholarship over recent years (Banerjee, 2001, 2008; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006; Mir & Mir, 2013; Prasad et al., 1997, Prasad and Prasad, 2003, Prasad 2003,), and have gone some way to unpacking how traditional discourses of organization can be presented as new, such as entrepreneurship (Khan, Kamal, Munir and Willmott, 2007); we have seen this in the way leaders at the BTC have presented Agile (chapter 3) and brand (chapter 2) as tools for emancipation, agency and a belief in the future at the BTC. In contrast to these assumptions however, the ethnographic realities of Agile and brands at the bank have been found to colonise bodies, experience and time at work, into a static image of the white, male technology entrepreneur, that reinforces traditional binaries of race, colonial power structures and time as a Western-centric conception of progress. The repackaging of traditional figures of authority such as the manager into the 'Scrum Master' and the transformation of physical bank branches on the high street into a brand of the 'bank of the future' on a smartphone app, can be seen as a reflection of cultural shifts in contemporary society in the 2010s, where apps are ubiquitous (Goggin, 2011) but it is also argued here to be a symptom of postcolony; a re-framing of old structures of empire and exploitation under new names and guises. The management of culture at work (Mills, 1988; Miller, 2002; Knights and Willmott, 2007; Chan and Clegg, 2010), is also shifting to reflect this at the BTC, as spaces are changed into 'Agile' spaces, light and fast and privileged (if your body matches this specification), with staff expected to internalise these brand messages and accelerate their work, bringing about the bank of the future at the BTC and for the disembodied image of 'the customer'. This may be constructed as a "war against the past", the bank trying to erase it's the messiness of its history and identity to live in a raceless, genderless future at the BTC. Managing war and incorporating war into the management of culture at work was also found to be vital to the BTC, as it is a striking feature of postcolony. Contemporary capitalism can be argued to share this requirement of war and of 'colonisation' of work and life (Habermas,

1984), and we also argue here that such colonisation is driven by a hyper-masculine and hyper-white logic; which we may find hidden in the pasts of the British Empire, and the BTC.

The Tower is born

The Tower's history was intimately tied to histories of British Imperial warfare. This ominous brick building loomed over the BTC, visible from almost any location at the site, and housed all of the bank's 'Infrastructure Services' teams (including Middleware and Mainframe). The Tower was built by the Nuclear Power Group in the 1950s, before this bank was gifted the site in exchange for writing off that organization's loans (according to the BTC's groundsman, who would recall many stories of this site's history to me throughout my time here, many of which could not be verified but which clearly lived on as myths that circulated at the site). Part of the structure of the Tower had been used for nuclear load testing during the 1950s and 1960s, but this section of the Tower was now abandoned and sealed off from staff and visitors, a rusting relic to war technology of the past. The development of nuclear power and testing facilities in 1950s Britain corresponded with a governmental aim to maintain 'position as a global power following the Second World War' (Maclellan, 2017) and as 'anti-colonial revolt across the Empire' (Putz, 2017), threatened to bring this power to an end. This desire to maintain global status also led to the testing of nuclear weapons in British colonies during this period, such as those used in 'operation Grapple' in 1957, where nine nuclear tests were carried out on the Kiritimati (Christmas) and Malden Islands, with indigenous I-Kiribati people and Fijian soldiers among the least protected from the effects of nuclear blasts and their aftermath, and suffering 'a pervasive racism' (Maclellan, 2017) by British military forces. Genetic disorders and intergenerational damage including cancers, deformities and infertility continue to affect groups subjected to British nuclear testing: 'decades later, facing ill-health... [New Zealand] and Fijian service personnel began to organize to claim compensation from the British government — a battle that continues today' (Putz, 2017). The development of 'gas-cooled, graphite moderated nuclear reactors' (New Scientist, 1957) by the Nuclear Power Group at facilities including the Tower and the experiments carried out on this site contributed towards British nuclear science and war technologies that end with colonial encounters of human and environmental ruin, and this site can therefore be understood as

implicated in the colonising and exploitative effects of war technologies, those whose effects continue to cause harm and whose legacies live on.

I was able to get a guided tour of this mysterious part of the building one day, as Johny, the BTC groundsman, tracked down the keys. We both crept slowly up a dusty set of stairs and across strange rooms frozen in time. A binder on the wall with handwritten names and job roles on yellowing card, next to a wind-dial telephone, reminded me of the vast technological changes this site had seen over the decades, and also that most of those named individuals working in this building in the 1950s and 60s were likely now deceased. These ghosts of organization, the people who worked on building nuclear capabilities for Britain at the end of Empire, were perhaps the starting point for lexicons and practices of war at the Tower, and I wondered how these staff experienced the 'phenomenology of place' (Edensor, 2008, p.331) of the Tower, whether they felt as 'at war' (in the words of one BTC Middleware technologist) as those current incumbents of the building did.

Middleware - war is peace

For my first weeks spent at the Tower I worked on the second floor, a vast open plan space where teams of 40-50 staff sit at groups of corporate desks and a sea of blue walls, carpet and strobe lighting surround us. I spent much of my time sitting next to Wilson, the Manager (or 'Vice President') of a team within Middleware, where I had been directed by Kitty to find out what challenges the managers of this team face day-to-day, and 'why aren't they interested in site events?', a key concern for Kitty's department, CRES. Wilson's smooth accent buried a gritty Northern background he let me peek at, in stories of his truck driver father and in revealing his tattoos, hidden by smart corporate suits, tailored waistcoats and colourful cravats. Wilson spoke to me about his 'soft' experience of work compared to that of his father: 'My dad could be put in tough situations, out in all weathers…at least there's no danger in IT!' The pervasive lexicon of war was surprising then for an organization that faced 'no danger', as Wilson put it.

The first signal that battles were going on were the constant exercises and 'drills' run at the Tower to prepare for attack: 'we have to be prepared in case the worst happens', Wilson tells me. 'War games' had become an important feature of the bank's security and 'resilience'

measures, designed to protect the bank from those unknowable dangers the future will ultimately bring: 'we simulate service disruptions, so that we can manage major incidents better when they happen.' This high risk, militaristic environment was ready to overcome any threat to the bank's stability: 'there was a CRES exercise run last week: how would a terrorist attack be managed?' Kitty told me at one of our coffee meetings. There was also a culture of 'escalation' at the BTC according to Wilson and other managers in Middleware, as technology 'problems' were 'escalated up the line of command' at the bank (an action taken when 'requests' to make changes to a technology are not dealt with fast enough by those in Middleware responsible for approving requests, or to the satisfaction of certain stakeholders who 'own' the request, so these get passed up the chain of command to more senior leaders). 'I've never heard of the level of escalation we have at this site. Or the level of security. There's a lack of trust', one member of Wilson's team tells me. 'Requests' and 'approvals' had become a necessity at the bank as the autonomy of technicians to make changes to the technologies they work on had been scaled back – for fear this posed a 'a security threat'. The result was an increase in the power of risk-managers and auditors following the financial crisis and stringent internal safeguards put in place by all UK banks to ensure no individuals could gamble with the bank's reputation by taking excessive risks. This risk-averse reality of infrastructure services, where defence from unseen threats was paramount, was tinged with paranoia and an aversion to individuals making decisions alone, an oppositional reality to the bank's fantasy of its staff's 'Agile' bodies working fast and autonomously. The mythical nature of the future in Agile, and the lack of a future found in work at the CoLab, was compounded at the Tower, where time and subjectivity were at war: no temporality or experience of work exceeded the colonising pressure of the app, and the fight to be top of downloads and ratings rankings on smartphone app stores. All work was a preparation for the bank's next battle or threat to this appified future; no positivity beyond this was visible or spoken of at the BTC. Time and experience of work in the Tower was found to be as colonised and colonising as Agile at the CoLab.

At The Tower, real and virtual 'incidents' were collapsed and became indistinguishable crises, ready to be managed. War was everywhere, from the 'incident calls' many teams in The Tower ran every morning, to the 'checkpoints' for bodies entering The Tower and the bounded grounds of the site (a barrier to enter the carpark, a barrier at every building that

requires security card access to make the bank open up). There were also virtual 'checkpoints' that technology projects in the Tower had to meet at specific junctures in time: 'Sort code migration checkpoint A…this must be secured by Saturday 10am', one team manager proclaimed to his team at the front of a dark room, preparing for battle with a powerpoint deck. An infrastructure of war was also housed at The Tower, from the bank's 'war rooms' to its 'Command Centre' – spaces specially built for the dangers working in IT could bring.

The 'Command Centre' was a newly built, gleaming glass space at the top of the Tower, securely locked and accessible only via tapping a security pass onto one of several camouflage glass entrances. This was an investment in winning the IT wars of the future the bank would face, a space for leaders at the BTC to manage live 'incidents', such as app failures that affected customers' ability to bank, and carefully plan strategic 'resilience' operations, for example upgrades to technology systems that posed a high risk to live banking services. This space was treated by this project's gatekeepers and those who worked in it as reverentially as the CoLab: a space where the future of the bank would be secured, or where 'success on the battlefield' was made, according to one service manager who worked in this space (2016). The Command Centre's myriad of huge screens at the front of the room monitored the performance of every technology at the bank, announcing the power of the bank's militaristic capability to defend itself against attacks. A reverantial near silence also percolated the space, just as it had in the CoLab. The dancing graphs and colours on the huge screens (red for 'severe incident', green for 'all go', amber for 'medium risk'),a visual language of the bank at war. A dark glass room stood on a platform one metre above the main space of the Command Centre, where a black wood conference table shaped like a missile took up almost the whole room. As leaders in Infrastructure Services gathered around this table for 'Global heightened awareness' meetings, or 'Brexit resiliency' talks (in the months leading up to the fateful vote), an illuminating light blue glow from its underbelly felt to me like it was bathing their faces with anticipation, readiness to act, and fear. Mostly men gathered around this missile each day, mostly in serious shirts of various hues of blue. Whether this stark aestheticisation of the fieldsite at war was an exaggerated 'ethnographer's gaze' (Kakavoulia, 2008), or whether there was a performative aspect to the dangerous potentiality of the bank at war for my interlocutors was not clear cut, and I came to the conclusion that both the former and latter were creating an ethnographic experience of war for me that was both hyper-masculine and

voyeuristic; as my interest as to who the next casualty at the Tower might be grew each day I remained seated around the missile table with these men at war. The kinds of war being fought here were different from the modernistic kitsch and entrepreneurial battles of the CoLab - with their aim of 'ever-quickening temporality' (Wajcman and Dodd, 2017), of accelerating work to keep up with real and perceived competition from technology companies. The Command Centre was instead a more still and quiet environment, where each strategic move was planned and executed with great precision and care, as it could result in casualties (in the form of broken technical systems, apps, customer accounts, reputations and jobs) – this was serious. . This was a space for senior technical leaders at the bank who knew 'how to keep the lights on' and 'what to do in case we're attacked' according to several technologists from Infrastructure services. The comparison to the aesthetics and temporality I felt at the CoLab was revealing, as the Command Centre was the front-line of the CoLab's accelerated organising, this was where the critical infrastructure to keep new applications being built at the Co-Lab alive and functioning lived, and it therefore struck me while spending time in the Tower that the bank of the future was a bank at war; this was the reality of appification, of fighting on the frontline of new technology frontiers.

As application and system updates and upgrades increased, the more resilience, protection measures, battle stations, and 'severe and bloody', to quote a Brexit resiliency manager (2016), incidents were required or resulted. The organization at war was completely normalised here, a natural evolution and by-product of work regimes such as Agile in other parts of the bank where new futures were being made - here in the Command Centre these same futures were being managed, risk-assessed, and sent out to beat the competition in the war for the de-materialised customer of the future.

The realities of maintaining this organization at war, this infrastructure of 'security' and 'resilience' at the bank, fell to the staff in Infrastructure Services, including Middleware. At a desk almost directly below the Command Centre in 2016, I ask Wilson to look at his management books, a collection of which lie in an auspicious deep drawer at the end of his row of desks. There's a book called 'Peopleware' that glares ominously up at me, published in 1999. The chapter about 'the furniture police' reminds me of CRES and the drive to refurbish the buildings of the BTC, transforming blue corporate lines of desks into futures of break-out spaces and 'loungification' (O'Doherty, 2015), along with attempts to transform the

staff who work in these new spaces. This book also calls the culture of working overtime in organizations the cause of 'team-icide', a morbid omen of the long unpaid hours of work in addition to the official workday that members of Wilson's team find themselves having to endure, and which some service managers and technologists say have driven them to take time off work for stress, while others have developed coping strategies such as the constant wringing of worry beads, or physical ticks like the automatic wink of the over-worked Service Manager in row 5074. Wilson also lends me 'The Phoenix Project', another management book I find in his collection. I find the references to an 'army of IT people' and 'an army of customer service managers' a reflection of Wilson's team and how they conceive of their own roles in the BTC: '. This also reminds me of the Technical Manager at the Co-Lab telling me to read the book he used to train cadets with, 'The Goal', that I might understand the 'shark infested waters' of the BTC better (one of the authors of he Goal being a military historian confirms it's war strategy credentials to me when I look it up).

Wilson's department, Middleware, is one of close to 120 technologists and managers, managing 60 'products' at the time of this ethnography, and responsible for providing the 'layer between what the customer sees and the hardware' that makes the growing number of applications (apps) being developed at the BTC, work. As well as the team based at the BTC, Middleware also included a global team, with staff in Lithuania, India, the US and South Africa, working remotely via the direction of their managers in the UK.

'We can't keep pushing people until they drop…It doesn't stop. We've lost a lot of people. Always losing control….' Terry, the over-worked Service Manager with the automatic wink, tells me the recent 20% cut in Middleware staff has hit the team hard, and he feels 'at war' with his job. His is constantly trying to fight the barrage of incoming service requests, change requests and technology certificate requests, and has become fluent in the silent, automatic clicking of buttons as soon as email alerts pop onto his screen, as they do constantly. He is kept going for hours on multi-pack Pepsi cans stashed away in a desk drawer. 'Silence and denial come naturally to the military…Silence prefers that no voice – of complaint or protest or indignation, disturb…the status quo' (Six-Hohenbalken and Weiss, 2016, p.172), and Terry's silence on his difficult feelings about working under the pressures of the bank at war is maintained by the continual bombardments of incoming work.

Fatigue after spending just a few hours with Terry and watching him fight his workload overwhelms me. The pressure for an immediate response, for each technology product he was contacted about to be assigned top priority as his desk was visited by anxious technologists and managers from different departments wanting approvals, these were daily tests of physical endurance and strength. After one full day with Terry my headache and sore eyes mirrored his persistent twitch, the embodied scar of long years at the front line of service. Terry's time and language were structured by the tasks his role required him to do, and he had to make his body comply, by means of automation of his responses and physical coping mechanisms. 'Why are we doing this?', a Service Manager who sits close to Terry moans at him. In these ethnographic moments we find a colonisation of work via cyclical regimes of management, which produce an order of subjectivity (Lennie, 1999; Casey, 1999; Hassard, Holliday and Willmott, 2000), one full of cynicism and frustration, as Middleware technologists feel subjected to the temporality of war and its cyclical lack of a future. Time for the Middleware team is cyclical and frantic, for example in the constant drive to meet growing quarterly targets of cost cutting, (Middleware was a 'cost centre' that could not produce profits for the bank due to the nature of its products being to 'keep the lights on') and cyclical renewals of technology certificates and application updates that were ever increasing, according to Terry. This meant there was no future for the Middleware team beyond an application and re-application of these cycles of war on cost, and war on enemies such as internal and external hackers, viruses, audit non-compliance, technical system failure and other security beaches. Terry and his Middleware colleagues were trapped in a myth reproduced by senior leaders at the bank of 'chasing the (technology) market' according to the Head of Infrastructure Services, trapped into the cycle of meeting difficult cost and service targets. There was a normalised regime of Orwellian 'war is peace' at this space at the Tower.

On the floor above this Middleware team at the top of the Tower, next to the space the Command Centre would later occupy, there used to sit close to 100 staff in 2014, who made up the 'Service Desk', those 'Level 1' call centre operatives we have described in chapter 2, who were all made redundant in 2015 and their jobs offshored to Lithuania to save cost. The Director of this team back in 2014 had spoken to me of the difficulties faced by Infrastructure Services to do more on scarcer budgets: 'Tech ops is like a steamship – [we're] the ones below, shovelling the coal. The one's above are always asking 'can't the ones shovelling the coal go

a bit faster?' The conditions of tight control and fewer material privileges at the Service Desk reflected this ('we only got a small budget to spend on Christmas dinner, much less than others'…'I struggle just to get the budget to provide some fruit for the teams', one Service Desk Manager had told me). The staff here felt they were struggling slavishly at the bottom of the hierarchy of the BTC, locked up on the top floor of the Tower for long hours each day, unable to attend the site events run by CRES, and with no gatekeepers interested in their presence at these, unlike other BTC teams, who were encouraged to attend farmers markets, barbeques, bouncy castle team building exercises, fashion sales and talks with external speakers during lunch or after working hours. 'Downstairs rowing the oars, that's us', the captain of this frontline team had continued: 'and it's getting harder and harder to carry on.' These metaphors of slavery, industrial images of exploitation and war were most pronounced, externalised almost as a military grunt by Managers at the Service Desk, where the darkest incarnations of intensified work regimes at the BTC were found: 'a woman tried to overdose again over the weekend' - a stressed and sad Service Desk Manager had told me one morning. The offshoring of these roles and the intense working hours and performance targets that went with them was a feature of Infrastructure Services, where teams in Lithuania and India were expected to take over these oars and carry on, helping to win the wars the bank was fighting with competitors, regulators, hackers, customers and itself; these workers were now the new bottom of the bank's hierarchy.

Collateral damage

Organizations operating in a global context in late capitalism have been argued to be sites where cultures of consumption (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001) of labour and materials, are ubiquitous, and where managing diversity and diverse global supply chains creates a constitution of 'global colonialism' (ibid). We can find such an example of this global colonialism in the description above of un-valued work at the BTC being outsourced to staff in developing countries, and also in the following account:

Wilson's second in command, a perpetually stressed and under-rested AVP ('Assistant Vice President') called Jo, spoke to me about members of her 'global' team (a small group in India)

being sacked, their contracts failing to be renewed, or poor working conditions being put in place as they were employed via local sub-contractor organizations to save money:

'You have to learn not to care [about people]. You can't save everybody.'

Jo's militaristic 'triage' role, her acceptance of the collateral damage created by this work, and her battle-hardened attitude to the disposability of bodies, particularly bodies of difference in far-away locations, demonstrated the inequalities of working conditions for those the bank utilised as labour at its global hubs in India for example, and the neo-colonial language of 'saving' these staff was also striking. An example of the BTC's value of 'Stewardship' in action perhaps, Kipling's white man's (in this case woman's) burden of rescuing low paid Indian workers from the even graver conditions they would apparently be subject to without the bank and its white managers to act as saviour and provide these workers with jobs, some even ending up working directly for the bank if they are 'outstanding and we can't do without them' according to Jo.

This kind of neo-colonial exploitation is a feature of postcolony; Jo's words reveal a war at the bank based on global supply chains of labour in a post-colonial context: 'The war isn't over, our competitors didn't disappear after the (financial) crash' – a justification from one senior leader at the BTC when discussing with his colleague the organizational tactics to offshore and save costs. Staff in the Tower were preparing for futures of warfare; for 'the cloud', for security breaches, and for moving to Agile's accelerated work regimes. Such regimes of war, as Banerjee and Linstead have argued (2001), are of course recycled from the past; colonising disciplines of cost saving and iterative productivity that make work a battle for staff subject to these conditions.

'Maybe it's something to do with being British – all this talk of war. Like "battering down the hatches", "annexing" and "land grabs"…maybe it's about building an empire'. This is Wilson's reply when I enquire as to why he believes metaphors of war are so much a part of culture and life at the BTC, why these words are attached so intimately to the technologies built, supported and eventually decommissioned at this site. 'We're diving into a new frontier…'

The constitution of Empire (or specifically the Empires of colonial European powers such as Britain, France, Spain and Portugal), has been discussed in organization studies as having been

based fundamentally on spreading 'modernity' to those new frontiers European states sought to colonise; building an Empire via colonisation 'through economic and cultural imperialism, military power, death and dispossession' (Jack et al., 2011, p.277), and all the military and State organization that went with this strategy. In Wilson's description of the violent practices of the British Empire as a possible explanation for the prevalence of military metaphors at the Tower, we see that these metaphors reflect Mbembe's argument that 'historical forces inflict psychic harm on collective bodies' and that 'violence shapes subjectivity' (p.259) in the postcolony, as the British Empire lives on in the languages and practices of organization at the Tower, still at the forefront of the minds of managers such as Wilson. As Frantz Fanon has written of the colonising of peoples and cultures by 20th centruy State powers: 'Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours.' (Fanon, 1961, p.15), This at once othering and neo-colonial protection and paternity is also an example of Mbembe's *appropriation, familiarization and utilisation* (2001), building on Fanon's argument, and we find similar regimes of assimilation and total-wipeout at the BTC in 2014-2016, particularly in the memories recalled by technicians based in the Tower of trips to South Africa to visit and manage the teams there. The South African subsidiary of this global bank with a UK brand and headquarters was bought in the 1990s (after the bank having sold out of South Africa following the protests against its involvement in apartheid trade deals in 1986). The South African subsidiary had been subsumed into the colonisers identity, with senior leadership administered remotely by white managers who would come and visit occasionally.

South African staff were apparently obliged to work within British cultural norms and language, and the brands of the South African bank were replaced with those of the UK bank. However, when the UK bank had decided to sell its stake in South Africa, this culture and branding was quite swiftly withdrawn, 'they need to learn to do it [run one of the Middleware technical systems] for themselves, they can't expect us to pick up the pieces', one technician in the Tower was heard complaining to his manager when discussing the South Africa technology hand over to South African staff. Neo-colonial practices were evident in the relations between the South African and staff at the BTC, as South Africa was objectified and internalised as another part of the bank's white man's burden: 'they're part of us, we're responsible for their performance' (Mainframe technician, 2016). Empires built on colonial

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histories of corruption and violent segregation were still audible in common discourse at the Tower in the discussions about the South Africa office: 'When we arrived we were shocked. Black members of the team were spoken to like 'the blacks will do this, the blacks will do that', it was just part of the culture there'…'The place was so corrupt…double charging…intimidation tactics'…'we had to go in and sort it all out'. Mbembe calls the Western conception of the continent of Africa 'perceptions and phantasms, in mutual perpetual pursuit…transforming itself into the other' (2001, p.242), and the othering of the South African bank, as if this was not part of the global bank and its brand at all, but rather a strange dislocation of capital and labour in a strange space the bank at once desired to colonise and escape from, was a clear example of this: 'The Africa separation…Michael were you aware Africa are refusing to pay their bills?...we'll be running their Mainframe for years to come'.

Mbembe reasons that in the postcolony the utilisation of the colonised by the colonisers requires a violence of 'conviviality' on both sides, and that 'the native offers himself or herself to the colonist as if not himself or herself' (2001, p.237). This simulation of truth, was displayed in one upbeat message Wilson's boss' boss (the so called 'big dad') delivered to a gathering at the Starbucks imitation cafe on the second floor of the Tower one afternoon. As a production of Edward Munch's 'The Scream' hung ominously from the wall behind the coffee counter, this big dad declared: 'Well the 'my survey' results [an internal survey of how employees feel about working at this site] are in…[our site] isn't doing well…but the guys in Lithuania are really happy.' I had wondered at the time why he thought this, an assumption based on this single survey result struck me as reminiscent of the comments of the Indian technologists when I asked them how they felt about working in the CoLab: 'we are very happy here, thank you ma'am'. Rather than the justification of "cultural difference" that may be utilised by mainstream debates in business, management and organization studies (Hofstede, 1983, 1984; and those following this tradition) for the positive, polite, statements foreign workers in global subsidiaries express, this response is argued here to be an explicit attempt to please managers and authority figures in the UK (who we have found are too busy achieving cost saving targets to ever make trips to visit their 'global resources'), in the doublespeak Mbembe posits is the marker for colonial violence in creating conviviality (2001, p.237). The war at the BTC ratifies the silence of its global workforce via perfunctory opportunities for 'feedback' such as the 'my survey' exercise. This explanation was reinforced

for me when I was able to listen to several difficult calls between Wilson and his Lithuanian 'resources' - unhappy with their end of year pay and causing Wilson to fret he may lose yet more members of his global team, as many had already started to leave the bank.

The bank had opened its Lithuanian technology centre in 2009, at a time when the strategy of the bank was global expansion into 'emerging markets' and for 'global capabilities' and supply chains, meaning attractively cheap land and labour costs drew the bank to divest its more basic ('level 1' and 'level 2' analyst roles) technology functions away from a single technology centre in the UK, where many technology teams consisted of an aging and increasingly expensive workforce. Around this time a technology centre in India was also opened, and both these new 'global hubs' were to stand as glowing examples of the future of banking - a multi-sited, 'dev-ops' workforce that could offer the customer far longer working hours of technology support, as well as unburdening the heavy workload of technology teams based in the bank's motherland.

Cracks in the dream of these 'global hubs' had begun to emerge over the years however, with young Lithuanian and Indian technologists frustrated at the ceiling on promotion they found at their hub of the future, and turn-over at the sites in Vilnius and Pune had been climbing up each year. A 'global travel ban' had been put in place by the bank's CEO in between my time at the BTC in 2014 and return in 2016, described as 'flagship leadership initiative', it was designed to 'stop unnecessary trips' by the bank's staff and to save money. This it certainly did, as was announced excitedly on a 'global call' the CTO (another big dad at the bank) periodically made to all staff at the, where bank employees could dial an internal number and listen to organizational performance updates from one of the bank's global leaders: 'we're proud to announce a £200million saving has been accrued from the global travel ban so far'. However, the ban was found to act as an enforcement mechanism for neo-colonial boundaries and hierarchies, a violence of privilege staff in the UK could wield over those working for the bank in developing countries or via third party contractors. Managers of 'global teams', such as Wilson and Jo, were prohibited from visiting their staff in other countries, instead relying on weekly video conference calls (which, more often than expected in a global technology centre, would fail for technical reasons) or the bank's internal instant messaging system for all contact with global teams 'Just ping me a note about it and I'll get back to you'. This created real inequalities in access to management, training opportunities

and career development for those working at the global hubs. The travel ban and other cost-saving initiatives such as slashed training budgets had a negative impact on morale and turnover in India and Lithuania, according to many in the Tower: 'it's a cultural thing, the teams want to see their leader', 'they don't feel valued, that's why they're leaving', and many at the BTC recognised the policy as myopic and functionally poor for the bank: 'the bank is short-sighted…we will lose more money than we will have clawed back from this'. However, there were no commentaries of the policy being unfair, neo-colonial or an aggressive act of violence towards workers on lower pay and often with more difficult working conditions than UK staff to begin with. In fact, what might be described as a 'culture of complaint' (Weeks, 2004) was prevalent at the BTC when global teams were discussed. The dislocated, disposable and colonised body, far-off burdens to senior technology managers in the UK, led to dichotomies and warring factions at the bank: 'The ways they work [those teams in global locations] is almost the opposite to [the bank's] values – they create a dichotomy from the beginning, it's 'us and them''.

Several managers in Infrastructure services were even witnessed (or expressed to me openly) feelings of glee at the inequalities afforded to their colleagues at the global hubs - in terms of promotion and working conditions, particularly when staff in these locations threatened their own position at the bank. One manager from Mainframe confided: 'She's got Michael wrapped around her little finger…oh there she goes again, Princess Sofia…look at those nails…aw they can't get online, what a shame'. This bitchy characterisation of a female Lithuanian manager who was popular with the Head of Mainframe by a male UK mainframe manager (one grade higher than his Lithuanian colleague), demonstrates how difference, in terms of geography and culture and gender and race, still mattered at the BTC, how foreign and female bodies could be othered and undermined when they were out of sight, and how the linguistic violence of the phallus in organization, characteristic of postcolony according to Mbembe, resulted in real world aggressions and attacks on those othered by the white, male normative model of organization at the BTC.

Opportunities to speak with technologists in Lithuania or India never materialised, always last on the list of priorities for Infrastructure Services managers to accommodate, despite numerous requests for access. Just as it had been almost impossible for me to access the stories and languages of (predominantly) Indian software developers in the CoLab, since my

'lightness of whiteness' (Ahmed, 2014) carried with it a tight lipped deferral to a symbolic authority and colonising history wherever it went at the BTC (despite my lack of phallic equipment), so there was also a nervousness among white managers about allowing me access to global teams via technological means such as video conferencing, in case the team members from these locations told stories that departed from the rhetorics of war required by the bank, perhaps. This lack of access was an interesting ethnographic problem, but had also made it difficult to engage fully in ethnography 'against the grain' (Harrison, 1993; Prasad, 2015), as those who would speak different testimonies of organization from those I had heard and witnessed from the significantly white, middle management at the UK BTC I had access to. One day I was able to peek at the private moments of a team in Lithuania from the Command Centre of the BTC: screens set up in this space streamed live pictures from the offices of global locations (a disciplinary technology of war in Foucauldian terms), streamed images of staff in Lithuania swaying with each other on desk chairs, laughing together, and finally one man gently falling asleep at his desk. Such behaviour was interpreted by UK staff as out of step with the bank's regime of accelerated, Agile bodies at work, racing towards the next iteration of the future, the next fight for approvals or with external threats. Shocked and astounded as he watched, one manager in the Command Centre pointed out the behaviour to those around him and shouted: 'what are we paying that lot for!' The castigation of behaviour classed as other to colonising regimes, the desire to make such other bodies to work harder and longer, and even the threat of annihilation in these words, is another mark of postcolony for Mbembe, who stresses 'The colonial relation, in its relation to subjection, was thus inseparable from the specific forms of punishment and a simultaneous quest for productivity' (2001, p.28).

Mbembe draws on Fanon's analysis that 'violence is the settler's' (1961, p.17), by declaring this means a 'labyrinth of forces' underpins colonial power, where 'violence is built into the structures of institutions' (2001, p.174) of spaces being colonised, or in his terms, those that have been colonised - the postcolony. Mbembe has also argued that there is a 'redemptive function of violence' (2002, p.249) in the postcolony, and we may also see this reflected in Wilson's words, as his team and others dive 'into a new frontier', to save themselves and the bank as much as those staff in global locations from oblivion. There is a 'divine impulse and possession' (Mbembe, 2001, p.219) in the colonising Empire, or the shadow of that which

continues to drive management regimes in contemporary times, such as this bank. This is also intimately linked to a 'totalising' colonisation of life by what Mbembe has described as 'God's Phallus', or, to put it simply, the phallocentric history of the colonisation of much of the world. We also find links back to this history in other metaphors of war at the Tower, in particular the importance of the Father figure, or the 'big dad' at the bank – a colonial and patriarchal signifier. We next explore the emphasis on family and specifically, father figures as phallic signifiers of colonisation, at the Tower.

Big dads and the Motherland

A laminated sign on the pillar behind Terry the Service Manager reads 'The App Hosting family' (his small team within Middleware). What came to mind in reading this was Catherine Casey's familial flows of cultural conditioning and control (1999). Casey has argued that the corporate family operates as a 'regulatory and disciplinary device' (1999, p.159), a 'colonisation of the lifeworld' to follow Habermas, (1984, 1987) in organizations, and this colonising force is also found in the accelerated capitalism the bank is creeping into the lives of consumers in the form of its smartphone apps, and into the working practices of those who work at the BTC - required to manage these de-materialised, de-racialised technologies. A further aspect to the metaphors of family at the Tower was the recurring theme of father figures, specifically so called 'big dads'. Wilson's boss' boss is referred to as 'our dad' several times by Wilson and also by members of his team, this dad being a no-nonsense Scot who has worked at the BTC for over 30 years, and occupies the only private office on this floor - a small corner one with a map of the world stuck to the wall. This map acts as a decorative reminder and artefact of the bank's global conquests of the past, and for senior men such as this Scottish leader (or 'dad' of the bank) to plan their next battle moves: 'It's useful, reminds me where my priorities are' the Scottish leader said of his world map. To my mind there was something of the Adam Smith about him, a sense of a moral philosophy and duty that drove his clear ambition and his decision making: 'the world is changing and people will be left behind, they are being left behind' (2016). My reflection was perhaps a result of the culture of infrastructure services desire for a founding father, a leadership figure who had a vision and could exert power on behalf of this function of the BTC, often dismissed as 'backwards' by many BTC workers I spoke to from the Co-Lab or Babbage House.

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Wilson tells me about escalation at the BTC being about telling one dad on another: 'it's about people going to tell their dad. Our dad! But there's always a bigger dad, but we need to always have the biggest dad!'

The phallocentric undercurrent of these words, of the metaphor for seeking out the biggest father figure at the bank to solve its problems, is a clear demonstration of Mbembe's theme of 'God's phallus' in *On the Postcolony*. What the biggest dad at the bank meant and who this figure could be in the collective imagination of globally dispersed teams of technologists and managers in Infrastructure Services, was unclear, but the biggest dad apparently corresponded to who's orders were ultimately obeyed at the postcolony of the bank. Who would write that 'song of shadows' (Mbembe, 2001, p.242) that hung over the bank like a call to war? Who was the ultimate father, the phallic Messianic truth to paraphrase Mbembe, who would save the bank from war and destruction? (At least for the 3-4 years of a CEO's tender before 'we just stop hearing about them haha!' according to one Middleware technologist, meaning they either moved on or were sacked). The dads at the bank represented the phallic signifier of dominated subjectivity, time and language that pervaded the spaces of the Tower, and the figures whom the ground troops of Infrastructure Services staff looked to for direction and to find out what future or carnage they could next expect: 'it's another global call with one of the big boys. let's dial in', one Middleware Technician recommends to another.

Phallic significations in organization are likely to be read via the work of Jacques Lacan, which has borne increasing interest from organization studies scholars over recent years (Gabriel, 1999; Driver, 2003; Kets de Vries, 2004; Katlaw, 2006; Harding, 2007; Contu, Driver and Jones, 2010; Knights and Clarke, 2017; Arnaud and Vidaillet, 2018). Lacan's idea of the phallus is argued to represent the centre of symbolic order and language (Kenny, 2009), and the closeness of the signifier and idea of the phallus to the penis, and hence to masculine essentialism and domination, has been a critique of Lacan's work from several theorists. These include Judith Butler, who has argued that the phallus is a specifically male signifier of social order and life (1993, p.77). Jameson has also called the phallus 'one of the basic organizational categories of the Symbolic Order itself' (2002, p.2). We may therefore see the phallus as a dominant signifier within organization, as activities and identities are ordered in the image of this symbol. The persistence of the concept and the centrality afforded to it, has

also been argued to have ontologically violent consequences (Butler et al., 2000; Stavrakakis, 2002), as the phallus privileges and normalises the body (abstract or real) of the white, straight man, dominating and excluding those left outside this privileged category. (Kenny, 2009, p.219). Mbembe writes of how Africa is that '"Other with a capital O" evoked by Jacques Lacan' (2001, p.3), an identity so othered to the phallus that the continent and its Blackness are 'portrayed as a vast dark cave', where 'strange signs, total confusion and primordial chaos' (Ibid), replace the order and masculine signification of the phallus. We can hear an echo of Luce Irigaray's feminist comparison of the signification of the mother to 'a mad desire…a dark continent' (1993, p.10), in this proclamation, and the feminist literature on patriarchy and gendered practice in organizations (Calás and Smircich, 1996, 1999; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Pullen, 2006; Gatrell, 2011; Philips, Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Vachhani, 2009, 2012; Fotaki et al., 2014; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015; Fotaki, Kenny and Vachhini, 2017; Rumens, 2017). Especially, the 'vagina dentata', or feminine demon in organization (Vachhani, 2009) speaks to Mbembe's very figure of the strange (2001) that is Africa, an otherness threatening to overcome the phallic norms and ideals of organization, such as this bank's 'big dads'. In a post-colonial reading of the phallic imagery ubiquitous at the BTC, we find Mbembe's category of Blackness rendered oppositional to the phallus by its own sign, and we may argue that so too is the postcolony we find in organisation – a creation of the colonising force of phallic organising, that which does violence to all that is other to its white, male reflection of order and time.

One day while I was in the Tower in 2014, the Chief Technology Officer of the global bank, one of those 'big dads' who made strategic decisions about technologies and the future the BTC and its global hubs, had visited the site. He was shown around the construction site that was to become the Command Centre, given 'celebrity treatment' according to Kitty, by CRES and a welcoming committee, as was common when such men visited: 'once they even painted the banisters (because he was coming)!'. (We may even read this quote via Mbembe's magical coitus or excitement that the father figure of monotheism has relied on for his colonising and civilising mission (2001)). The CTO gave a speech in a very large room crowded with workers from the BTC: 'We're being asked to reduce the cost of organisation…to reduce the big black fog that's hanging over us…our shares are trading at a big discount. Litigation and a burden of risky assets hang over us.' The big black fog that hung ominously over the bank was spoken

of in the terms of war and violence that had already become familiar to me: 'Life is short and brutal' the CTO continued. His short and brutal speech began with praise of the new Agile methodologies revolutionising the bank from the inside out: 'we have to work more Agile-ly than ever before', ending with a caution of the war that was coming: 'Silicon Valley people think banking is easy, they're coming after our business'. Quite how brutal the wars the bank was involved in had become for some at the Tower were revealed to me in one shocking ethnographic moment which shall be described below.

A cry for help

The violence of the phallocentric discourse at the BTC became apparent to me one afternoon when Wilson and I attended a management meeting in a blue meeting room, complete with murals of clouds on the walls, with a small number of other 'VPs' in Infrastructure Services, and Denise, the 'Director' of the VPs and Wilson's boss. Her smoky voice croaked through the latest battle lines. 'Leaders at different levels have autonomy for their areas, and we can't influence those battles.' All the VPs nodded gravely. 'We're seeing a lot of attrition' There was more vigorous nodding and shaking of heads. An order from the bank's big dads to find an extra £200 million to cut from the Infrastructure Services budget in the next two years had resulted in more outsourcing and off-shoring of technology roles to 'cheaper hubs', or former colonies, such as India. Here long working hours to allow the bank's live service to cover as close to a 24 hour clock as possible were required, and less than attractive pay and conditions were also common thanks for sub-contracting practices according to Jo and technologists at the BTC who spoke about their concerns regarding the global hubs. There were also no 'higher grades' of leadership in the global locations, as the bank preferred teams to be remotely managed from the UK (the mother-bank and the motherland), as there was a general lack of concern among senior management at the BTC for the wellbeing and aspirations of teams in India, Lithuania, the Philippines and South Africa. This reality saw foreign workers othered by space and time (literally any timezone other than the UK's) at once colonised and left behind: 'the theoretical and practical recognition of the body and flesh of "the stranger" as flesh and body just like mine…long posed, and still poses, a problem for Western consciousness.' (Mbembe, 2001, p.2). After some animated discussion in this meeting on the damage cost

cutting, chronic underfunding, and the limited autonomy a 'cost centre' has in charting its own destiny, Denise utters a statement that was either meant to be a joke or a cry for help:

'I know this doesn't sound good, but I feel like we've been raped.'

This phrase was especially shocking perhaps as it came from the only female Director in the Tower; a channelling of the colonised feminine other suffering under the phallic cost cuts being inflicted on her. The language of sexual violence was also that of war, a feature at the BTC for as long as anyone could remember, and represented a material, visceral, and sexual colonising violence done to the staff in the Tower – as the Middleware and other teams mourned at being unable to protect themselves from the bank's phallic demands for more and more service, more obedience, more prostration. The radical feminist scholar Luce Irigaray has called language 'able to nourish but also to kill, rape and poison' (1985, p.37), and we can understand Denise's cry for help as a wound that persists in more than metaphor alone. The core of phallocentric discourse of organization is highly gendered (Vachhani, 2012), and becomes explicitly visible in Denise's comment, along with the resignation of her and her team that there is nothing to be done but accept the commands passed down from the big dads at the top, a metaphor of the raped body of denied difference (see Metcalfe and Linstead, 2003 and Grosz, 1990 for work that explores and explicates difference via phallocentism in organization). The phallocentric discourse so central to Mbembe's conception of postcolony (2001) is revealed here at work at the Tower, through metaphor and representational languages of war, struggle and violence.

Mbembe has also spoken of colonisation as the most 'intimate form of domination' possible (2001, p.237), as the identity of the colonised subject is absorbed into the colonisers, including, most intimately, their body and their language. As the lips of Denise, the Director of Middleware, re-embody rape as a weapon of war for us in that meeting room, so we are shocked into reading the corporate values nailed up on the wall above her head:

'Respect

Integrity

Service

Excellence

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Stewardship'

A ceremonial crucifix of the bank's fantasised identity, this artefact could not reveal the colonial histories and contemporary postcolony at war in the bank. These branded words above Denise's head represented a stark juxtaposition with the colonisation of work, cost saving exercises and practices such as the offshoring of labour to former British colonies and the metaphor of sexual violence that Denise had pronounced to be her team's past and their destiny. There is only a negative future in this conception of the organization, where colonisation is the 'most intimate' form of domination of all (Mbembe, 2001) and there is no escaping it. Another team at the Tower however, the 'Mainframe men' were found to have strategies for escaping the bank's cyclical regimes of war and violence.

Mainframe Men

If we find teams at the Tower such as those in Middleware we have described above, as working within the discourses and signifiers of war imagery, succumbing to it via physical ticks, stress and even metaphorical cries of sexual violence, then the next team we shall meet were experiencing war at the Tower differently. The Mainframe team sat on the top floor of the Tower, and were able to find comradery, brotherhood and even salvation in the phenomenology, language and practices of war that so consumed life and work at the Tower. I spent several weeks with the Mainframe team, a team which had been the source of frustration to generations of 'big dads' at the bank, according to Michael, the Head of Mainframe - who had worked at the BTC for over 30 years. Mainframe technology is in many ways the antithesis to Agile, light and fast software development. According to Michael, Mainframe is 'the golden copy of all the bank's data, all it's processes, everything...without it, nothing would function.' In all my time at the BTC I was unable to see a physical Mainframe computer, huge 'bulky black boxes' (Michael's words) that process the bank's critical applications and store customer and internal data. The reason for this was Mainframes were kept at highly secure data centres in locations not known to the public, with up to four copies of each machine in different technology centres, in case of a terrorist attack, a fire, or other security breach were to 'take one of them out' (Mainframe security technologist's words).

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Spending time with the Mainframe team at the Top of the Tower was a dissonant experience for me following weeks of immersion in the Agile world of designer jumpers, sexy skirts and smart-casual CoLab, where youth, speed and newness were part of its aesthetics of privilege, and the average age of staff occupying the space likely not more than 35. The staff who occupied the Mainframe floor by contrast, seated in several rows of desks with bulky desktop computers in front of them, wearing blue corporate shirts with pens resting in the top pockets, spoke of another era at the bank, far removed in time and space from the mythical futures of Agile, where customers apparently desired only apps in 'the cloud' and no physical body of a bank. Mainframe was referred to as 'an old way [of doing things], how the bank used to work' by Kitty and as 'a bit old fashioned I think...we're not really sure what goes on there!' by Val, this project's gatekeepers. The men of Mainframe – overwhelmingly men - were experts, highly specialised in their particular Mainframe technologies, almost exclusively having worked in Mainframe at this bank over their long careers, mostly in The Tower. This old guard of the bank were under fire from their own mortality: 'We have an ageing problem, a crisis really. We need new blood coming into Mainframe...or all the knowledge will be gone', Michael tells me. This war for talent, discussions about the team's low turnover and close male relationships defined what is was like to work in the Mainframe team. There was also a remarkable bodily closeness of soldiers together in the barracks that subliminally characterised this team: 'One technician fondles another's (male) breast, a shoulder is caressed...they try on each other's glasses...' (ethnographer's fieldnotes), and the men would know each other's lives and health struggles intimately. The Mainframe computers this team supported were described as bodies of masculine conquest and history: 'we name the Mainframes after American States...its power...but we'd have preferred football teams!' Michael's 'right hand man' tells me. The lack of women in this team meant the phallocentrism of their world was taken for granted, yet these men were also able to find a resistance to the helplessness of war and its cyclical cost cutting at the BTC via their camaraderie and closeness. Their years of tirelessly fighting, side by side through the years of cyclical cost cutting and acceleration at the bank, mean we might appropriately quote Ambrose's Band of Brothers for a description of the male Mainframe relationship: 'The result of these shared experiences was a closeness unknown to all outsiders. Comrades are closer than friends, closer than brothers' (Ambrose, 1992, p.4) This team had also made itself a safe space to ridicule and speak about their worries for the future of the bank under new regimes of 'dev-ops' (a lack of specialisation

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where each technologist can carry out every stage of a technology process), cloud technologies and Agile, as they attempted to 'keep our heads down…stay out of the next transformation', or the next battle at the BTC, according to Michael. This team were seated just outside the gleaming glass walls of the newly built Command Centre, which seemed to intensify their ambitions to stay out of the wars that leaders above them in the bank's hierarchy were waging on their behalf, as Mainframe upgrades had accelerated from once every few years to several times a year, a mirroring and mimicking of the accelerated, Agile technology iterations we have experienced and discussed taking place at the CoLab.

Mainframe was a world where close male relationships and shared histories carried on until death and beyond:

> 'Don't take this as a really sad thing…but someone in one of the teams died a while ago, and at the funeral there was a group of 25 including members of his team, and it was just like nothing had changed. Like no time had gone by. There was this…bond between them.'

Michael told me matter-of-factly. These Mainframe men were dealing with the consequences of the end of war and violence, the end of colonisations of organizing that they faced in their own deaths. This open discourse on death is another example of how this team dealt with the colonising regime of war at the BTC differently to Middleware; escapes were on the horizon and they were happy to reflect on the demise of the ageing male body. For Mbembe, 'the moment of death is the moment when the dead man is suddenly naked and without power' (2001, p.166), and we may then understand this openness to dying by the Mainframe team as a surrendering of the phallic power the team enjoyed, as managers of global teams and the most senior and experienced technologists at the bank. Mainframe had also been dealing with the threat of organizational annihilation for many years, always finding ways to circumvent the firing line: 'There have been cyclical attempts to outsource Mainframe from the bank, because we're seen as very expensive, it's happening again, but it's always failed' Michael told me sadly as the team underwent another assessment by external consultants and accountants to see if costs could be saved by selling Mainframe off. I found myself being colonised by the history and appeal of Mainframe as a technology and mode of working so different to the extremes of Agile in the CoLab, by this band-of-brothers in arms mentality. On the Mainframe floor at the top of the Tower jokes would fly back and forth between the

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technologists all day, and each member of the team was encouraged and supported by Michael's attempts to resist the wars the bank wanted Mainframe to fight: 'we can't do a whole upgrade over the weekend as Eddy needs the time off so they'll just have to wait won't they!' I re-visited the men and spaces of Mainframe after the official time with this team had come to an end, missing the comradery of the team. I had become an ally of the old Home Guard, Agar's "professional stranger" (2008) who was enjoying my closeness to the camaraderie of the men in this team but never quite belonging myself. I had begun willing the regime that was trying to outsource their labour to fail yet again, with a traitor's glee when this was indeed the announcement that came through on a one-way call to the Mainframe team – one of the 'big dads' in charge of all Infrastructure Services clearly fed up he would not be saving any money by terminating Mainframe.

These staff would speak together, and to me, very openly about the wars Mainframe had to fight for the bank, and of their own embodied experiences of work, retirement, illness and death:

> 'Gary has cancer, it's terminal' Michael tells me. 'I like his bandana, that's cool', I say. Michael replies 'Oh yes he wears that since the chemo, good lad.' (Extract from a discussion with the Head of Mainframe).

Similarly to the Indian technologist on his last day at the CoLab professing it was the 'best time of my life', these men of Mainframe were not succumbing to symptoms of colonisation and the effects of war metaphors imagery such as anxiety and practices of aggression – to get the next iteration finished or leave people behind (to paraphrase Jo's discussion of being unable to 'save' her Indian technologists). Rather, the Mainframe team were able to use the same discourse of war as a vehicle for resistance, mobilising strong relationships with colleagues to cope with the capitalist, Agile acceleration and appification going on at the BTC. This may end in ridicule (the white managers and Scrum Master laughing at the Indian technicians) or attempts to punish and cut off teams from the bank (cyclical attempts to outsource Mainframe), but there is a power in resisting the phallus of organization, in finding alternative responses to lexicons and cultures of war that make up Mbembe's postcolony, and which we find to be so endemic at the BTC. The men of Mainframe were almost completely disinterested in the wars the bank was fighting - such as attempts to cost cut or

translate their work into Agile to compete with leaner technology organizations - and they spoke instead of 'mentoring the next generation' and being 'custodians of Mainframe', a 'paternal' work as Michael described it. This paternalism is still an artefact of the ever-present phallus that structures life in this organization, and perhaps we may argue allows this group of 40-45 white men to remain un-conscripted into the battles at the bank, even while enjoying the comradeship and privileges of a colonial army.

From this ambiguity, we may ask, as Mbembe does, 'can we really talk of moving beyond colonialism?' (2001, p.237) in contemporary organizations such as a Bank Technology Centre? Perhaps the intimacy of war with the life of this site, in the metaphors and practices we see in 2014-2016, and in the silent histories of its buildings – as we will conclude with below, as we started this chapter – would tell us war and colonialism was not over, merely in *post*: 'close by' in Lithuanian etymology.

Ulus has described in her work on postcolonial workplace emotions how 'enduring racial tensions, arising from white privilege, continue to shape people's experiences' (2014, p.1), as colonial relations of difference continue to be revisited in daily organizational practices, a continuation of a colonial past of racialized treatment. Mbembe has also written of how different functions of violence in postcolony, 'abolish any idea of ancestry and therefore any debt with regard to a past' (2002, p.269), and we can understand this myth of temporality in the postcolony to be a totally violent one, a myth which knows no time but war, and which seeks assimilation of histories via 'the civilising mill of Christianity and the colonial State' (Ibid, p.249), along with their contemporary doppelgangers of global corporations, each generating a 'redemptive' regime of violence on bodies, temporalities and spaces of difference (Ibid). Such a temporality of violence 'shapes subjectivity' according to Mbembe (2002, p.259), as a 'general cultural experience' of Africa (Ibid, p.265), and as experienced in other parts of the world too (Ibid). We shall explore in the next chapter how such a 'general cultural experience' of war has become the normalised modus operandi in the language, strategies and daily management practices persued at the BTC. This includes how lexicons and metaphors are used to describe how the bank's 'global hubs' in India, Lithuania and elsewhere must 'battle hard' (as one Director at the BTC would often say) to maintain their time and productivity targets, to protect the bank from incessant threats of competition and demise. The ways in

which this time of war in postcolony has been internalised may be recognised as a specific type of embodiment; an embodied experience of working in postcolony.

Old wars and new possibilities

We finish this chapter with a description of another building at the BTC whose histories and current uses at the site were as shrouded in warfare as those of the Tower. The 'Old Hall' was the first structure built on this site, in 1917. A mansion designed in a French chateau style, this 'Old Hall' had used to be the home of privilege at the BTC from the 1960s-1980s, with senior leaders lounging in ornate leather armchairs and meeting to decide on important matters of strategy at polished dark wood tables furnished with crystal ashtrays (the groundsman had pictures to this effect, luckily - see figure X). An 'Executive dining room' had furnished this impressive Old Hall, somewhere for important men to eat and relax while their secretaries typed up memos and visitors from other buildings on the site would wait patiently in the grand entrance hall to pay them a visit, according to the BTC groundsman, a diligent archivist of this site's historical documents and photographs.

The material transformation of this building from one of leadership and privilege in the early years of the BTC, to what seemed to be the forgotten backwater of this site in 2014-16, had made the Old Hall an invitingly mysterious space to explore. The imposing, square form of the building with its many darkened windows promised intrigue and secret revelations of those who had lived in its grand rooms long ago, white walls and columns of stone still holding up the skeleton of this body, dirtied with age, seemingly guarding the land around it, like centurions on permanent duty. My anthropomorphism of the Old Hall only intensified when I learnt the myths of the family who had originally built and lived there from Johny the groundsman: 'The story goes…[the original owner] shot himself in that house, in the ballroom…his wife then died…the son, well they say he hung himself from a tree in the grounds close by'. The Old Hall contained a dark history of violence, at least in the collective imagination of those working at the BTC who spoke of it, who would recall memories and myths of the Old Hall. The spectre of suicidal bodies, mythical or not, hung thickly in the air of the dim, claustrophobic-ly grand rooms of the Old Hall: 'I had a meeting booked up in the attic there…I was so scared, it's spooky', remarked one Service Manager in the Mini-apps team. Old men of history stared down from huge gilded frames on the walls of 'the library',

'the ballroom' and 'the study', (among other rooms), unnerving reminders of the beneficiaries of Empire and global trade in the 19th and early 20th centuries for those who moved through the Old Hall in contemporary flows of life – usually only when all other options for meeting rooms had been abandoned. Most of these rooms were now usually empty and un-used. However, in 2016 I did find that several rooms of the Old Hall were now places of punishment rather than privilege, spaces no technology team wished to enter willingly. 'There are war rooms in [the Old Hall]…when a team is failing they can be sent there with a deadline to improve things'. Kitty, breezily concerned with renovating and revitalising the spaces of the BTC, mentioned this as a contrast to the bright culture of success stories in the CoLab, with its ticking timers (or time bombs) counting down to new technologies being created, rather than time in the Old Hall counting down to survival or destruction (a project's decommissioning).

War was an intimate part of the life of this site, the Old Hall having also been a refuge for child evacuees of the Second World War in the 1940s. Children from poor families were brought down from the nearest large Northern city to be hidden away in the safety of the countryside. Johny showed me a letter from an elderly woman dated 2010, detailing how she had been one of those children living in the Old Hall during wartime, and how she would dearly love to visit the house again before her death. The groundsman explains how he gave this 'great old lady' a tour of the house that year, and how the former child of war had loved walking through her old familiar spaces and recanting her memories of sleeping on camping beds and playing in the beautiful gardens of the house, war a 'far-away worry'. Attached to her letter was a painting she had done of the Old Hall (see Figure vii), the rich colours and out of proportion lines bringing a new vision of the building and its spaces, one of a nostalgic, bright white dreamscape, where violence could not encroach. War is a language that bodies cannot forget (Linstead and Thanem, 2007), yet we find in the midst of war a new genesis of creative and material experience is created, one that is other to pain, loss, violence and anxiety. Postcolony is a time of entanglement for Mbembe, yet one that is incapable of positivity, of a future (2001; 2005). The BTC's phallocentric regimes of discourse leave no space for entanglements, for multiple temporalities, no spaces for bodies to de-colonise themselves. In paying attention to ethnographic stories that talk about the warfare and colonial legacies still present in 2014-2016 at the BTC, including a concern with phenomenologies such as memory,

and preparing for a time after the organization of work, war and death (as we saw in the Mainframe team for example), we have found in this ethnography a shared recognition or shared experience of the colonising mode of organization that is war at the BTC for all the teams based in the Tower, and we have attempted an ethnography against the grain of normative management worlds and practices on the surface of organization, one that is post-colonial in its approach and focus. Finding new ways of experiencing time and space in organization, which resist oppressive modes of organizing (Pullen and Rhodes, 2013) or colonisation, is something that is difficult to do in a postcolony – that is, to move beyond the static myth and time of postcolony and its wars, and into more complex entanglements - such as acknowledgement of the other and positive reciprocation that represents a future. However, there are bodies, languages and subjectivities that are excessive to the phallocentric regimes of the bank, and which sing different songs, not all of them battle cries.

Final thoughts

Transcending colonising regimes of organisation such as the phallic and military metaphors prevalent at the Tower of the BTC is difficult for several reasons: the normalisation of these regimes into familial metaphors of managing culture in organization, and phallic signifiers such as the 'big dads', and there was found to be a conviviality to these colonisations that left those subject to them with little space to voice resistance or to de-colonise via new entanglements of time and experience. The potential for transcendence has also been found to come via male comradeship in the face of war, or the acceptance of death as the final get-out-clause. All these are not very hopeful alternatives to colonising organization, and the next and final part of this thesis will aim to explore what a positive future for postcolony could look like, if one is imagined to exist.

This chapter has found war to be a normalised, normative discourse of organization at the BTC, particularly for teams working at 'The Tower' such as Middleware and Mainframe. War was an essential part of the *temporal phenomenology of postcolony* – as time and experience crashed into cyclical battles at the BTC, that were found to have their beginnings in the colonial organising practices of the British Empire and military. Languages of warfare and violence alongside neo-colonial practices such as the offshoring of undervalued work to low

cost locations in developing countries - or 'global hubs' - and the way staff in these locations were referred to and treated by white British BTC managers, both in an attempt to colonize and a 'white man's burden,' an embodied example of the bank's brand of global 'Stewardship' discussed in chapter 2 is demonstrated in the treatment of contract resources at 'global hubs' by British managers in The Tower. This postcolony at the Tower 'emerges from a sort of violent gust, with its languages, its beauty and ugliness, it's ways of summing up the world' (Mbembe, 2001, p.242); in listening to the language of colonial conquest and phallocentic norms found to dominate the Tower, particularly in the language phallic signifiers such as 'big dads' at the bank. However, there were also found to be those finding a resistance to war imagery at the BTC by their close, male relationships of comradery. The tension between acts of resistance and accommodation of regimes of colonial power, are an 'illicit cohabitation' Mbembe has argued, and can be seen as an important link to the future in postcolony, where productive tensions and visions of alternative ways of organising work may emerge, as we will discuss next in the final section of this thesis.

Figure 21: *Missile table: A missile shaped table from one meeting room in the 'Command Centre'.*

Figure 22: *Sacrificing technologies: The glass wall of another meeting room, one metre off the ground in the Command Centre. 'Sacrificial' technologies to be 'decom' (decommissioned) are represented by coloured post-it notes in Agile-eske fashion.*

Figure 23: *War room: A meeting in the Command Centre. Virtual bodies arrive via video conferencing technologies to discuss 'resilience' to the threats posed by Brexit before the result is announced in June 2016.*

Figure 24: Despair at Starbucks: A representation of Edward Munch's painting 'The Scream' decorates the small café on the Middleware floor of 'The Tower' building. Depictions of bodies in distress speak to the bodies at war on this floor, who gather here for a coffee break.

Figure 25: *Historical picture: A photograph of the 'Old Hall' marked '1959' on the back. The rural site is covered with snow and looks romantic and picturesque.*

Figure 26: *Panorama: A panorama view of one aspect of the rural grounds of the bank technology centre. The Old Hall can be seen peeking into the picture in the left distance.*
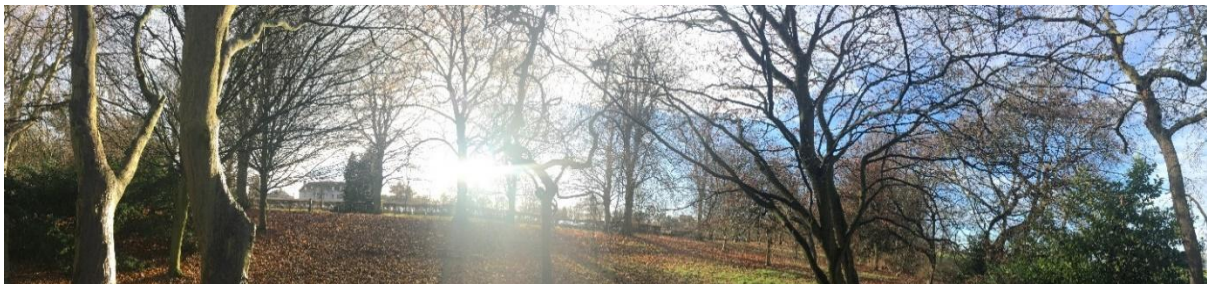
Figure 27: War memories: A painting of the Old Hall by a former child evacuee of World War II who had lived in the house during wartime.

Figure 28: Building the Tower: The Tower being constructed. Photograph from the 1950s, when the site belonged to the Nuclear Power Group.
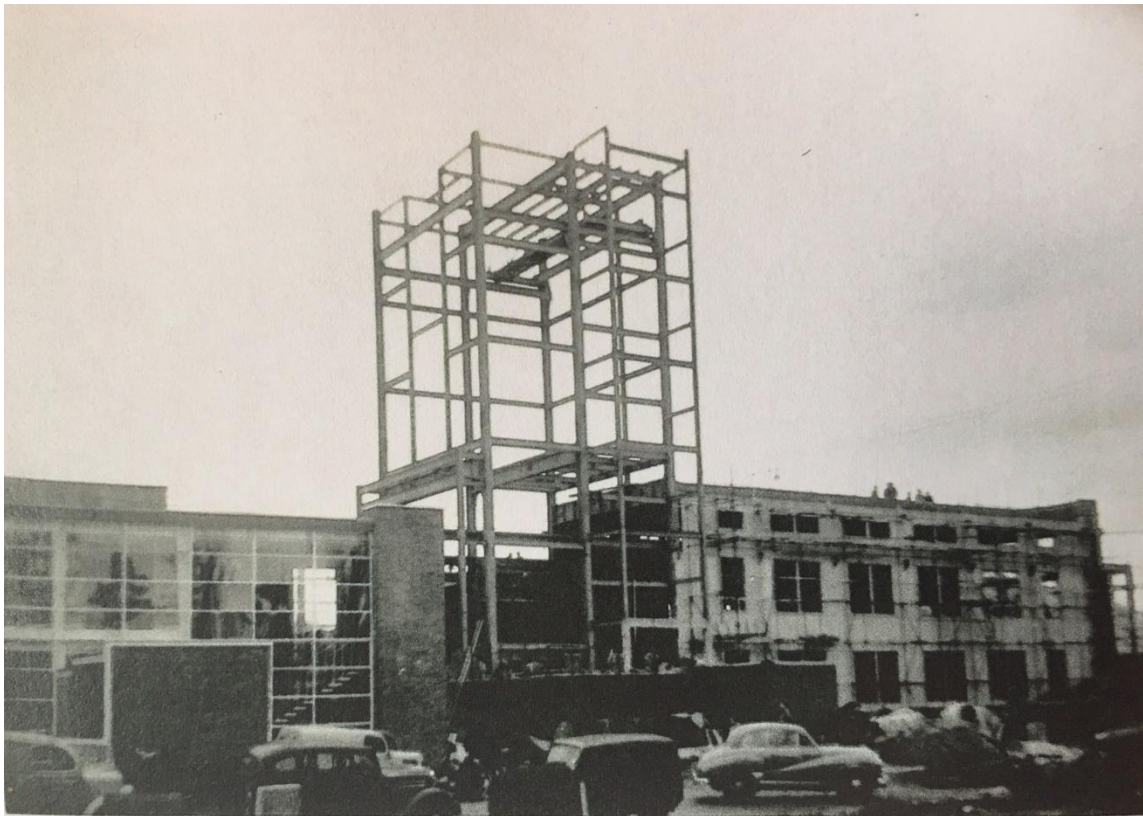
Figure 29: Nuclear Tower: A photograph of the Tower, circa 1959.

Figure 30: Old war rooms: One of the Executive meetings rooms in the Old Hall, circa 1960.

Figure 31: *Checkpoints: A slide from a powerpoint is presented up on a wall in the Old Hall. We see time is dissected by military style 'Checkpoints', and precision is vital.*

Conclusion

Where has this thesis led us to following the violent crashing into the field at the start of this ethnography? What have we found that *postcolony* can do for studies of business, management and organization and for contemporary work itself? What can this concept help us scholars and us who work in organizations (such as a Bank Technology Centre) to achieve?

Tripartite postcolony

This thesis has sought to engage in ethnography 'against the grain' of mainstream, Western epistemologies, practices and debates within business, management and organization studies (following the work of Prasad, 2012, Stoler, 2010, and Harrison, 1993), as these are argued to have absented and silenced the histories and legacies of colonial Empire in contemporary life and organizing. This project has sought to do this via re-considering how a global bank is being organized in our contemporary era, centre-ing one bank's colonial history and current organisational practices, branding and global strategy within its technology funtion at the heart of this project's contribution to postcolonial research in organization studies. This bank's relationships with global subsidiaries outside the UK, several in former British colonies, and the non-white, non-British staff who either travelled to the BTC to work on technology products (on short contracts), or were employed in the 'digital hubs' of India, Lithuania, the Philippines or South Africa for the bank, emerged as central to this ethnography. These have provided a rich and emergent series of narratives that have been described and explored in the previous chapters, demonstrating a contemporary and broad relevance of Achille Mbembe's idea of the 'Postcolony' for organizations. To make sense of the bank as a postcolony organization this work has sought to engage seriously with Achille Mbembe's corpus of work, one that has been almost completely overlooked, or side-stepped by both mainstream and critical organization studies. By drawing attention to Mbembe's transformational idea of postcolony and his methods of phenomenological yet grounded deconstruction of concepts from an African, postcolonial subject perspective, it is hoped further engagements will take place in the future with Mbembe's work, as a debate has now

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been started within the organization studies (particularly CMS and postcolonial scholars of organization, business and management) community via the contribution of this thesis. The specific areas of theoretical contribution have been defined as temporality, phenomenology and postcolonial theory debates.

We return to the 'tripartite contribution' mentioned in chapter 1; in addressing postcolony in organization, this thesis has sought to build a bridge between the often-partitioned debates taking place in critical management studies regarding postcoloniality, temporality and materiality. We have argued that colonization, time and materiality are mutually interdependent for those working in organizations (chapter 1, p.15). In the ethnographic work carried out at different spaces of the BTC from 2014-2016, a *temporal phenomenology of postcolony* is argued to have emerged from these experiences, which I was able to make sense of as a researcher via the work of Achille Mbembe, particularly his vital contribution to postcolonial scholarship 'On the Postcolony' (2001). The research field was found to emerge through the ethnographic experience as postcolony in the terms Mbembe expresses, as a space and a time and an experience politicised and organised via colonial encounters of the past and a continued neo-colonial relationship between institutional forces that attempt to exploit and colonise peoples whom are othered by these regimes. The accelerated temporality of contemporary capitalism (Johnson et al., 2009) was creating what Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje have called alternative narratives of time (2004) at the BTC, alternatives to conceptions of linear progress usually found in studies of business, management and organization. Time was rather experienced by many at the BTC as cyclical, static or discontinuous; yearly rounds of cost cuts on technology teams inflicted an expected pain and failed 'Agile sprints' were repeated, bringing technology teams 'back around to the next initiative' (Middleware Manager, 2016). This thesis has also demonstrated Johansen and de Cock's argument that time in organizations can be ideologically driven (2017). Specifically for this project at the BTC, time was found to be imagined by many of the most senior managers as a de-materialisation and 'appification' of the bank, from high street branches and physical data centres closing down, to a future where the bank became virtual software applications on customers' smartphones. This was an ideologically driven future in the sense that the desire for de-materialisation into the app was an attempt to simulate Silicon Valley technology giants and 'fin tech start-ups', which senior leaders at the BTC were found to

admire and praise. This simulation included an internalisation by many staff at the BTC of an image or signifier of the white, male, technology entrepreneur, which made up many of the bank's brand images. These images were found to be ubiquitous at the BTC - a de-racialised and colonising as this thesis has argued - and included both internal and external marketing materials relating to the so called 'bank of the future'. In terms of linking to debates in materiality is OS, this project has made the case that postcolony at the BTC is a lived experience, a connection between colonization, time and phenomenology, which are mutually interdependent for those working at the BTC. This extends Fotaki's work arguing that gender, discourse and materiality are mutually re-inforcing in organization (2014), contributing a post-colonial perspective to existing debates on the material qualities of work in critical management studies.

The destabilising of colonising regimes of organization has been discussed from a materiality perspective in OS (Carlile et al. 2013; Jones, 2013; Parker, 2000; Dale, 2001; Dale and Latham, 2015), and this thesis has sought to illuminate the colonising regimes that made up the BTC; the cultivation of positive spatial forms, following from Gordillo (2014), that were vital for colonising to take place. The CoLab and the Tower were two spaces we explored as creating organization that was both neo-colonial and phallic, in the control these spaces enacted on bodies of difference (to the norms of white, male bodies). The internalisation of war and violence in the spaces of work, such as the Command Centre and war rooms of The Tower has also been discussed as systemic to a postcolony organisation. By identifying new colonising regimes, or modes of organizing (Lury, 2004), this thesis makes a new contribution to this field – fundamentally that an attention to histories of the colonial pasts (or 'colonistic paradigms', González, 2003), and continued colonisations of organization must be the first step in any destabilising, or de-centering in Mbembe's terms (2017), the mainstream assumptions of Western-centric organization.

Postcolony and brand

In chapter 2, two key categories of brand images at the BTC were discussed as being prevalent and important for this postcolonial analysis: there was brand A); those artefacts at the BTC that depicted the bank de-materialising, in a world where banking disappeared into virtual

applications and the 'bank of the future' was providing services for de-materialised customers. There was also brand B), those which depicted the bank as a global brand with 'global values', including artefacts displayed around the BTC with the bank's values of 'Stewardship' and 'Integrity'. What this thesis has termed a 'colonizing mode of organizing' (chapter 2, p.1), following Lury's 2004 phrase, was common to both these categories of branded artefacts, which have acted as representations of the legacies of this global bank's imperial past during British Imperial rule. The *de-racialised* nature of brand A was found to be a striking feature of the postcoloniality of these images – as the bank's customers and staff were de-materialised into a technology app with no race, and the bodies who were creating and managing these app technologies were also vanished by the bank's brands and no longer visible. We found that the bank's reliance on the labour of workers from developing countries, it's 'global hubs' in India and Lithuania in particular, were crucial for the creation of the branded 'bank of the future' to succeed, despite these being whitewashed out of these brand images, which only represent the white, agile bodies of the male technology entrepreneur of Silicon Valley. We also discovered how this bank had been engaged in an 'in-out' relationship with the South African market for many years, de-branding itself in this market in response to apartheid in 1986 (see *Figure 3* for how the bank's logo was damaged by this association), re-branding itself in this market in the 1990s and de-branding itself again in 2016: '[This bank] has been a very big brand in Africa', 'ending its presence in Africa after 100 years' an article from Bloomberg is quoted as saying in 2018, when news of this bank's withdrawal from the South African market via the sell-off of its stake in a South African subsidiary began making headlines (Henderson, 2018).

We explored in chapter 2 how the withdrawal of the bank's brand in South Africa was driven by a whitewashing to cover up colonial encounters, and we also found this to be the case in examining the bank's 'global values' of 'Stewardship' in the branded images of 'local workers' and 'us' at the BTC. The ethnographic realities of precarious conditions for workers at the bank's 'global hubs' and the historical relationship of exploitation between British organizations and India during Empire brought this idea of 'Stewardship' crashing down and into an echo of Kipling's 'White Man's Burden' for the bank. The same could be said of statements by staff at the BTC about workers at these 'global hubs' such as: 'they're part of us too, we have to look after them' (the Head of Mainframe discussing the bank's employees

in Lithuania). Images of Indian men being taught or told what to do by white men were common in the liminal spaces of the BTC such as the toilets. We could theorise this is a subliminal message in itself of the private and shitty nature of colonial power structures continuing in contemporary organizations; as Mbembe puts it, a 'flow of shit' that is a metaphor of the digestive process in the neo-colonial 'trail of violence' intrinsic to the postcolony, that we find 'reproduced, reoccurring, even in the remotest, tiniest corners of everyday life' (2001, p.107). What we discovered in the brands of the BTC were more than a branded management fad (Collins, 2003), brands A and B at the BTC were artefacts of postcolony, depictions of the bank's image of its own future – whitewashed from the histories of Empire and the bank's complicity in historic and contemporary colonisation of labour in developing countries.

The 'bank of the future' brands at the BTC were other powerful images and artefacts that were found to have a genesis in images and simulation of the Silicon Valley technology entrepreneur and start-up cultures. From discussions I had with one senior leader involved in developing the bank's first payments app, and the way apps were discussed throughout the BTC as reified technologies - signifiers of the bank's future, they were found to represent a saviour role as the bank struggled to keep pace with the innovations of large Silicon Valley technology giants, 'fin tech start-ups' and a transformed, competitive regulatory landscape since the 2007 financial crisis. This simulation of a tech start-up culture and the technology entrepreneur – the so called 'great white sharks' according to one technology manager – were found to play a colonising role in the organisation in terms of both gender and race. Apps were being built to be 'Agile' and in the image of the 'great *white* sharks' the bank's senior leaders were afraid of, a 'phantasmic attachment' (Jones and Spicer, 2005) that was producing 'gendered subalternizing discourses of high-technology entrepreneurship' (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2009). The white technology leaders at the BTC utilised the brands they described as of 'the New World' – with all the colonial legacies we discussed in that loaded term – to describe and to represent what we have termed the appification of the bank, as strategies for high street branch closures in favour of 'self-service' apps became the preferred mode of organising. These brand images also went beyond Alf Rehn's pop culture images that he has found to have become common in contemporary organisations (2008), although the technology entrepreneur imagined as the white men of Silicon Valley success can be argued

to be an image that has crashed into the mainstream of not only business, management and organisation studies but of contemporary life, acting as Habermas' colonising life force as it does so (1984).

Postcolony and Agile

Chapter 3 saw an exploration of the work methodology of Agile at the BTC, in one building named the 'CoLab' (a shorthand for 'collaboration'). We attempted to trace the history and contemporary popularity of Agile working and to understand the preference and emphasis of this kind of work at the BTC. In the segregation of space, management of time and the specific working practices and terminologies of Agile at the CoLab, we found a regime of work that was colonising those who performed Agile tasks – bodies in the CoLab who were unanimously non-white and non-British, brought over to work at the BTC by the bank on short-term, precarious employment contracts. What this work has termed the 'Agile tensions' between the professions of 'autonomy' and 'self- managing teams' found on a static webpage called the 'Agile Manifesto', followed by 'Agile Coaches' at the BTC, and the ethnographic realities of Indian, African and Middle Eastern software developers and testers being tightly controlled by the temporality of Agile and their 'Scrum Masters', was a productive tension for this work to explore, and revealed what this project has termed postcolony at the BTC.

The potential of the temporality of postcolony (that we explored in chapter 3) for creating new kinds of entanglements (Pullen and Rhodes, 2013), was found to be realised in the ethnographic moments of the CoLab, as time failed to conform to the Agile 6 week 'sprint' to create the next iteration of the future (the next version of banking software), and instead we found a series of discontinuous times of what the future in Agile would be, and an equal number of sprint 'fails', where statements such as 'we'll have to re-configure' were common place. This also mirrored the impossibility of reaching the future for the Mini-apps team in chapter 2, who were always contending with more 'problems' for every application iteration that was created. The certainty promised by Agile work was found to be a myth in the disjunctured time of the CoLab, and entanglements of time a feature of Agile work. There was a failure of simplistic models of temporality to explain what was going on in the Agile teams of the CoLab, and This contributes to work currently being done within organization studies,

such as Johansen and De Cock's study on the conception of time for elite actors in organization, and their 'ideologically marked' visions of the future (2017). This chapter found the temporal ideology at the CoLab to reflect a neo-colonial ideology, one full of the lexicons of Agile and its 'scrums' 'stand ups' 'masters' and 'owners' that speak both of the British Empire, the game of rugby and the elitism of the British public school system, all of which were exported to the colonies. Agile is argued to be a further export of colonial legacies and encounters in its treatment of workers from developing countries and its normalisation of the white, agile body of the white technology entrepreneur.

This chapter also contributes to debates on Agile and project management in CMS, in particular Hodgson and Briand's discussion of Agile as a post-bureaucratic set of management practices (2013). This ethnography found there to be a neo-colonial nature to power relations in Agile between managers and 'Scrum Masters' (who were found to be white and predominantly male at the BTC), and the technologists carrying out the Agile work in the Agile method (who were found to all be non-white and non-British). These inequalities started in the control of 'feature factory' (Agile) teams bodies in their requirement to stand up for Scrum meetings and not to wear headphones while working in the CoLab, to the car park politics of contractors being unable to park on site, forcing these teams to exit the site together on large coaches provided for them by the BTC at a specific leaving time. These neo-colonial practices were argued to be colonising materialities or sets of embodied relations that reinforced historical colonial inequalities and difference among bodies in the CoLab.

Postcolony and war

In chapter 5 we discovered how postcolony may enable organization studies to work with imagery of war in organizations more productively by adopting a post-colonial perspective; by seeing and assessing these images as a symptom of postcolony. We revealed how there was a normalisation and internalisation of metaphors concerning war and violence at the BTC, finding that the history of the bank and one BTC building in particular – the 'Tower' – was intimately connected to legacies of war and weaponization of British Imperial power. Military metaphors used at the BTC were argued to be acting as signifiers of the phallus in organization. The phallus is argued to be a representation of gendered and white masculine

normativity at the bank, following critiques of the Lacanian phallus as producing ontologically violent consequences (Butler et al., 2000; Stavrakakis, 2002), especially for marginalised groups in organization who do not conform to the white male norm. Phallic metaphors of war such as describing senior leaders at the Tower as 'big dads' and a cry of 'rape' when one (female) manager at the Tower described how she was experiencing the regimes of cost cutting and battles with her bosses at the bank, were found to be a feature of work at the Tower. We found that what was going on at the Tower may contribute to literatures on the management of culture at work in CMS (Mills, 1988; Miller, 2002; Knights and Willmott, 2007; Chan and Clegg, 2010), by an attention to the war this bank is waging against its own past – in its attempts to dematerialise and whitewash its history as part of British colonialism, and also in incorporating war into managing culture at work. The hyper-masculine and hyper-white logics of war we find at the Tower are argued to act in the same colonising force as Habermas has posited (1984).

We also discussed how work was colonised at the Tower by cyclical regimes of management, which produce a specific subjectivity, as has been explored previously in organization studies (Lennie, 1999; Casey, 1999; Hassard, Holliday and Willmott, 2000). Staff at the Tower were at war with their workloads, their bosses and cyclical cost cutting exercises that bred frustration and cynicism. Metaphors of slaves at the bottom of a ship rowing the oars to keep the bank a-float and workers in the industrial revolution shovelling coal that were used by team managers demonstrated this, as well as the legacies of colonial relations to languages used today at the BTC. There was also found to be a battle going on between white British managers at the BTC and their peers or subordinates in the 'global hubs' in developing countries, as white managers insisted 'you have to learn not to care', as they managed the workloads of Indian workers with poor pay and conditions in order for the bank to save money on labour costs. Mbembe has called war a fundamental part of the lived experience of postcolony (2001), and this thesis has argued that this has been shown to be the case at the BTC, in the internalised metaphors of war, the normalisation of a hyper-masculine and hyper-white signifier in the ways the bank organises itself (eg. war games, checkpoints, escalation, deference to the 'big dads'), and the organizational practices of neo-colonial exploitation and othering of workers in India, Lithuania, South Africa and the Philippines.

Postcolony for the Manager

In terms of what we may call 'practical' implications of this work and its utilisation of the Postcolony concept for organizations today, we may begin by considering what managers should make of Postcolony and how they might incorporate this concept into their management practices. As a first step, I would argue that this work should act as a warning to managers to open their eyes to the colonial histories of their organizations, whether they work at a Technology Centre that used to be part of a 'Colonial Bank' or somewhere with a very different history. In the return to the languages of war and the references to British Empire we found in Agile terminology at the Co-Lab at the BTC (chapters 3 and 5), there is a slippage towards what this thesis has called colonising regimes of organising, those that mirror the colonial relationships of the past in their universalisation of a light, agile identity and experience of work, and which exclude and even demonise that which does not fit into this organizational mould (as we saw in Darrell's experience in chapter 3).

Managers would do well then to first be aware of the legacies of colonisation that might be hiding in plain sight in their workplace practices, language and the ways in which identities are constructed and reinforced. Managers may find that once a post-colonial perspective is adopted when examining their own organizational structures and ways of working, some of the more hidden aspects of the post-colony, or the blueprints of work in a time after colonialism, are suddenly made explicit, and there opens an opportunity to challenge the rationale and trajectory of such practices. Even in the most functionalist terms, being open to the possibility of Postcolony in organizations could help managers improve the long-term outcomes of projects, such as the Cheque Imaging Project (CIP), which had been in existential turmoil for some time when this ethnographer began studying its spaces and intricacies.

Thanks to the short term and precarious work contracts of technology workers who had travelled over from India to build the digital infrastructure of the CIP there were chronic gaps in skilled labour to meet tight deadlines, and so these were missed and money was wasted as workers, predominantly from Pune and other large Indian metropolis's were 'sent back home' to quote one of the 'Scrum Masters' on the CIP - leaving the future of the Cheque Imaging technology itself, that was planned to underpin the new digital banking revolution away from the need for paper cheques, in as equally a precarious a state as the workers who had been building it. By creating strategies to challenge and circumvent these kinds of practices that

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mirror the colonial relationships of the past, where a cheaper labour force from British colonies would be utilised to build British industrial wealth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see chapter 2 for examples related to the Colonial Bank), managers in twenty first century organizations may build more resilient organizations. As well as that, they may also provide spaces of work that improve morale, and build more inclusive cultures of work. This may be achieved by making an explicit openness to and acceptance of difference: of bodies who look and experience the world differently at work, through different histories and backgrounds and preferences. An accommodation of difference is in many ways an antithesis to working in the mould of the abstract ideal of the 'lightness of whiteness' to use Ahmed's phrase (2014) of the white, male, technology entrepreneur that we found at the heart of Agile and its history at the BTC (chapter 3), or the war-making that sees employees always 'readying for battle', in the words of one Senior Manager in the Tower (chapter 5). If managers can begin to take a post-colonial perspective to their role, to see the both dead and aliveness of the Postcolony in their own organizations, then what we have described as colonising regimes of work such as Agile may no longer hold such attractive myths as new mantras of work to transform productivity.

In terms of transforming work at the BTC, the implications of this work could be just that; in the best case a root and branch re-consideration of how and why work is done the ways it is at the BTC could and should be undertaken, in light of the findings of this project – that there is a Postcolony at the BTC. Current provisions this bank has in place for corporate social responsibility for example (remember that marketing poster in the toilets: 'Good for local workers and for us'), should be re-examined through the lens of the practical realities of the bank's 'values' this ethnography has found – particularly how 'Stewardship' is currently being enacted in post-colonial contexts. In locations such as India and Lithuania in particular, the BTC's 'digital hubs' have been set up in the last few years to take advantage of cheaper labour, and it was explained by managers at the BTC that there is a ceiling on promotion opportunities and a 'travel ban' on all managers to visit their 'global teams' in these locations. Staff working for the bank here are also treated very differently from British workers based at the BTC by their UK based colleagues (from mockery to exclusion to dismissal being common, every day practices, often very unconsciously enacted but with powerful consequences, such as low staff morale and high turnover in these locations). All this has the caveat of being uncovered

from the ethnographic perspective of the BTC, the 'strategic centre of the bank's technology functions', where white British managers are the vast majority of decision makers and made up a large proportion of access, interviews and observation of working practices at the bank. A more complete set of recommendations for this bank would need to be made via exploring the 'Digital Hubs' too, and understanding their realities directly, rather than through the prism of white, UK managerialism and the cultures and agendas this brings with it. For example, video conference calls and emails were only witnessed and observed from sitting in BTC meeting rooms and desks, and the difficulties and inequalities of work in other spatially removed teams and parts of the organization were translated via this perspective. By engaging more seriously in ethnographic research in their global teams, the BTC and the bank as a whole could gain a valuable perspective on their organizational challenges and opportunities, in what is ultimately an 'entanglement of the postcolonial experience' (Mbembe, 2015, p.14), an organization deeply entwined in a colonial history and a post-colonial future.

Postcolony: a future?

The future and the postcolony are two difficult concepts to reconcile in many ways; we have discussed the implications for research on temporality that this analysis of postcolony at the BTC has been able to offer, and we have found a discontinuous time of Agile work at the CoLab and cyclical regimes of cost cutting at The Tower that bring the bank back to its histories of colonial warfare. These then would speak to a lack of a future for the postcolony, an inability to transcend the shadow of Empire and the crash of traditional Western models of organising rooted in these histories. We might then ask the question, can we manage the postcolony? (As is hinted at in the title of this thesis). In Mbembe's words, 'we can never sufficiently emphasise the complexity and heterogeneity of the colonial experience' (2017, p.62), and the space and time after colonialism is still one that requires 'protection and repair' (2017, p.180), however, if we have learnt anything about the organization of postcolony from this research at the BTC it is that this mode of organizing relies heavily on the obfuscation of truth. That is, the hiding of histories that are difficult and implicated in colonial power and suffering, which enable neo-colonial legacies of similar organizational practices of inequality to persist today. What is the potential then for other models of organizing, which seek to

move on from colonisation and find radically new ways of organising capital, labour and work? Mbembe has written that a postracial era is far from us (2017), but that:

'Like the worker's movements of the nineteenth century and the struggles of women, our modernity has been haunted by the desire for abolition once carried by the slaves. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the dream lived on in the struggles for decolonisation, which from the beginning had a global dimension. Their significance was never only local. It was always universal. Even when anticolonial struggles mobilised local actors, in a circumscribed country or territory, they were always at the origin of solidarities forged on a planetary and transnational scale. It was these struggles that each time allowed for the extension, or rather the universalisation, of rights that had previously remained the privilege of a single race.' (2017, p.172).

In this extract we hear Mbembe describe the solidarity of decolonising aims with those of feminists and labour rights activists, and that the possibilities for a future of his postcolony may lie in the universalisation of changes that take place at a local level. In terms of applying this to an organizational context, we may argue that local organising by groups marginalised by colonising regimes of organization, each with aims of de-colonisation of different kinds, could be a productive strategy for creating new futures of work.

Some critical scholars of organisation have also argued that 'critical performativity' could be a way out of the 'impasse' CMS has often found itself in, where the ability to talk freely about legacies of Empire and colonialism seems to be chastened, and 'Critique has always been in tension with a desire for influence' Parker and Parker (2017, p.1367). Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman use Judith Butler's work to argue for the importance of revealing dominant discourses in organisation (such as those of war or Agile at the BTC) to be performative (2009), 'a way of moving CMS away from its antagonistic relationship with management while maintaining a critical sensibility.' (Parker and Parker, 2017, p.1368). By revealing colonising regimes of organisation to be based on historical relationships of colonial domination that continue to structure relations in contemporary organizations (such as global banks), we can add to this call from a post-colonial perspective. In order for organizational researchers to engage with managers and contribute to a more emancipated organizational praxis, we must end the silence of Empire that is so pervasive in organization today, and by 'reorienting the trajectories' of management generally and historically followed in the West, following Prasad

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(2012), Stoler (2010) and Harrison (1993) in attempting ethnography that aims to work 'against the grain', against dominant discourses, temporalities and Eurocentric stories about the relationship between "materialism" and "science" (Willey, 2016, p.994), to create new understandings of the legacies of colonialism in organisation, and strategies for a potential future beyond what we have posited as the postcolony that thrives today at the BTC.

Future avenues for extending research on postcolony, or a plurality of postcolonies that may exist in multiple organizations, should include attempts to develop methodologically the ethnographic tradition for postcolonial research, particularly for 'studying up' in Nader's terms (1969). This would enable a researcher to move on from the shaking and crashing impacts of neo-colonial practices in contemporary organization that I experienced in this ethnography, and nurture more direct and phenomenological engagements with marginalised groups in Western contexts and what Prasad calls 'elite organisations' such as global banks (2017), which this ethnography struggled to do. The 'lightness of whiteness' that Ahmed has pointed out marks the experience of white researchers with privilege when they go into the field and come back into spaces of the academie (2014), was certainly a methodological challenge for this research, as my body was marked as soon as I entered the BTC as white, female, middle class, and to be managed within and by those same groups. The majority of teams at the BTC being male dominated and the majority of staff at the BTC being middle class meant these intersectionalities were of no particular issue (I was able to gain good access to both white men and women at the BTC, and a number of working class voices when I worked with the 'Service Desk' call centre team in 2014). However, when it came to engaging with non-white, non-British interlocutors, barriers such as lack of willingness to facilitate conversations by white managers, my time with teams organised in such a way that excluded hearing from non-white, non-British voices, and the silencing effect of my own whiteness were found to be significant barriers to in-depth engagement with these BTC staff. Zoe Todd, the post-colonial indigenous anthropologist, has argued that whiteness is still a pervasive force in anthropological research and the appropriation of fieldwork interlocutors all too common (2009, 2016, 2017). This has been a trend which this work has tried to remain acutely aware of and sensitive too, and it shall be noted again here that this work does not purport to speak on behalf of or for any marginalised groups in organization. In Spivak's terms: 'the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group' (2010, p.70), instead,

what this work has sought to achieve is a call for studies of business, management and organization to focus more intently on the legacies of colonial Empire that remain not only 'imperial ruinations' (Stoler, 2008) signalling the past, but living and political systems of colonisation and inequality that require acknowledgement and action.

The practical difficulties we face in carrying out de-colonial and post-colonial research, as well as de-colonising our own practices as a community of scholars is underscored by the neo-colonial encounters in our own organizations, as Zoe Todd has written about at length (2009, 2016, 2018).

By explicitly addressing these issues within critical management studies (CMS), we may argue the first step to creating a future beyond what this thesis has termed the postcolony, following from Mbembe (1992, 1996, 2001), is actually being achieved. To crash into the silence of Empire, colonialism and the persistent inequalities these foster between Western, white organizations and others that has characterised both mainstream and critical studies of organisation with voices that demand alternatives, that demand the de-colonisation of organization, is a radical act. Voicing concerns amongst ourselves will enable us to challenge neo-colonial practices that emerge in our research projects without hypocrisy, and with a voice that speaks to a future that we might possibly imagine beyond the postcolony.

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