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Chapter 13: At the Intersection of Theory and History:

A Research Agenda for Historical Organization Studies

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Introduction

In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1970: xv) recites Jorge Luis Borges'
fictional taxonomy of animals to capture the fragmentation and confusing arbitrariness of any
culturally determined system of knowledge. Much the same confusion might arise by using
the total knowledge of organization theory to construct a taxonomy of organizations, dividing
them thus:

"(a) those belonging to the gods, (b) dead, (c) profitable (d) open systems, (e)
machines, (f) positive, (g) processes, (h) cows, (i) emotional, (j) performing, (k),
imagined, (l), mindsets, (m) enacted, embodied, embrained, (m) *et cetera*, (n) broken,
(o) inimitable, (p) isomorphic, (q) occupying niches, (r) contingencies against dread,
(s) structural adjustments, (t) broken hammers, (u) spider plants, (v) brains, (w) cages,
(x) animals, (y) psychic structures, (z) classified elsewhere."

Fanciful? Not really. We have no doubt that each one of these terms might fruitfully be used
to develop a whole panoply of theories about what organizations are. In fact, in every case we
can think of literatures that do precisely that. Indeed, they do precisely that and much more
besides; the imaginaries of theory know no bounds. If we want to signify what is an
organization there are far too many ways of answering the question to satisfy a sober and
disciplined mind. Such minds are too industriously proclaiming the verity of their schemas

and casting scorn on those of others, thus showing the sobriety and discipline of the minds in question.

There is one ontological 'given' that constitutes all organizations. Their history. All "organizations are complex structures-in-motion that are best conceptualized as historically constituted entities" (Clegg, 1981: 545). Odd then, is it not, that the historical facticity of organizations, however contested, is what anchors them in space and time yet is routinely discounted? Consider an indubitable aspect that all organizations share: they are a network of social relations that extend across space and through time. Given this, the historical situatedness of spatiality and temporality would seem to be a prominent feature. If history is one unifying constant in organization theory, then it is ironical that so much of that theory seems unfamiliar with its history.

That there is organization and are organizations is a simple fact of social life, wherever it might be situated. Just as there might be eight million stories to be found in the city, so might there be in the organizations that make up the city (Silliphant, 1958). Some of the tales come extraordinarily well annotated, curated by archivists while others may be just rumours, remembrances. There are, as Boje (2011) suggests, not only narratives but also ante-narratives, fragments of stories, allusions. History is known through its telling and remembering as well as its re-membering and its forgetting. History translates a sense of the past in the present through accounts, be they oral traditions, organizational or legal accounts, accounts in the media or gossip, or simply what interviewees might tell us when we ask them specific questions. Any of these accounts both reveal and conceal data about the accounting and that which is accounted as well as that which is not accounted. No authority resides in any single accounting; if it did, we would have to defer to various accounts far more than

would be wise in scholarly terms. Just because a key figure, a very stable genius, for example, acting in a role in which considerable power is vested, provides an account of something, a wise person would not accept such an account at face value. They would cross-check accounts, review sources, document interpretations, build up a grid elaborating what is taken to be the reliability of the various sources consulted. They would situate the being, the character, of the object under study and those that populated it, through a tapestry of sources.

The object of the organization is both a historical actor and actant; it is personified and instrumental; it is the voices and the voiceless of history as well as those devices that dominated and liberated that which became that history. There are many histories, some official, some unofficial, others scurrilous and some imagined. Any actually existing organization contains myriad histories that situate it: founders' tales, creation myths; consultants' reports and survey responses; ethnographies and audits; video, audio, text-based accounts; tales of power as well as troubled times; accounts of the subaltern as well as subaltern accounts; her story as well as his story; the good, the bad and the ugly.

Given the detritus of material sedimented in the structuring of relations, in devices developed, adopted and abandoned, in performances rated and appraised, in characters recalled and celebrated as well as those condemned to be forgotten, leaving the barest traces, of designs superseded and inimitable capabilities in place and out of time, there is an infinite number of accounts; indeed, millions of stories.

Making sense of Historical Organization Studies – an illustration

One of us (Clegg, 2017) published a contribution called "The East India Company: The first modern multinational?" Three years later, in 2020, the author read a newly published book, *The Anarchy: the relentless rise of the East India Company* by William Dalrymple (2019).

Both contributions deal with the same phenomenon, the actually existing organization known as the East India Company, and both argue a similar thesis that, in Dalrymple's (2019: 396) words, 'the East India Company – the first great multinational corporation, and the first to run amok – was the ultimate model and prototype for many of today's joint stock companies.' He goes on to remark in conclusion to his magisterial volume, how,

> Such was the disruption caused in eighteenth-century India by the advent of the East India Company that a whole new literary genre was invented to deal with it. This is the genre of moralizing histories known as The Book of Admonition, or '*Ibrat-Nâma.* The admonitory purpose of these histories was put succinctly by Khair ud-Din Illahabadi, the author of the best known volume: 'Az f*âra-did-I sar -guzasht-i guzashtâgan, bar khud 'ibrat pazîrad' –* By considering these past lives, take heed for your own future.

The East India Company remains history's most ominous warning about the potential for abuse of corporate power – and the insidious means by which the interests of shareholders can seemingly become those of the state. For as recent American adventures in Iraq have shown, our world is far from post-imperial, and quite probably never will be. Instead, Empire is transforming itself into forms of global power that use campaign contributions and commercial lobbying, multinational finance systems and global markets, corporate influence and the predictive data harvesting of the new surveillance-capitalism rather than – or sometimes alongside – overt military conquest, occupation or direct economic domination to affect its ends.

> Four hundred and twenty years after its founding, the story of the East India Company has never been more current (Dalrymple, 2019: 396-7).

In telling his tale of power Dalrymple deploys a huge variety of source material: he uses maps of eighteenth century India, constructs a *dramatis personae* of the complex cast of characters that people his pages, as well as a grasp of the actants that aided and abetted their rise and fall, comprised of ships, forts, navigation devices, finances and banking systems, weapons, military strategies, famines, financial crises and much else. The book features ample illustrations, both literally and figuratively, of the people and places discussed, catalogues of manuscripts consulted in the Indian National Archives, the Company's official records, the private correspondence of many of its most famous actors, the poetry of Shah Alam, the Bengali poet Ganga Ram's *Maharashta Purana*, Archives in the Punjab, England, Scotland, both public and private, materials from French, English, Tamil, Persian, Bengali and Urdu sources, as well as scholarly articles in journals of repute. The book teems with life and detail.

No one can read this astonishingly detailed work of history without being overawed by the sheer industry that the six long years, as well as the assistance the author had during that time, has been able to produce. Yet, the nearest that the author comes to offering a theory about the organization that he has so carefully studied comes in the last two pages. In many ways the book is a testament to one part of the 'dual integrity' (Maclean, Harvey and Clegg, 2016) written about in the first chapter of this book, the methodological rigour (Maclean, Harvey and Stringfellow, 2017), the sound and robust investigatory procedures that characterize the best histories. History at its purest is written from the sources and the prodigious work required to digest and detail these sources, composing a narrative.

When Clegg wrote the paper on the East India Company that was published in 2017 he had consulted just a few primary sources and a selection of secondary sources, but he was armed

at the ready with a conceptual apparatus that he was able to draw on from a work he had completed on conceptualizing multinationals in a book on *Strategy: Theory & Practice* (Clegg, Schweitzer, Pitelis and Whittle, 2017). The research for that chapter provided a conceptual frame with which to view the East India Company. He began from the concepts and read the data through these, having a grid with which to make sense of that data consulted. He fashioned one part of dual integrity quite readily, having the resources to hand. A narrative was fashioned also, strung on the superstructure of the conceptual grid with a datum from here, a datum from there. The author is in no doubt that the grid came first, however; once the grid was extracted from the prior work on multinational strategy, the sensemaking was in place to arrange the data, as they were available through access to various secondary works, to construct the narrative. The East India paper was a work of history that approached its subject through a conceptual grid, as opposed to Dalrymple's (2019) approach through the archives.

These are two quite opposed ways of working; one privileges data, fragments, sources, carefully crafted into a narrative vibrant with detail and long in the recounting. The other privileges concepts and the grids that they can conjure, then searches for the data to illustrate the thesis. What dual integrity requires in its demands is the accomplishment of both practices: it must be able to achieve organizational mastery in narrating the sources into a ripping yarn and that yarn should be woven into the weft and warp of a conceptual frame provided by detailed knowledge of disembedded and generalizing concepts as deployed across a variety of appropriate theoretical sources. Had the Dalrymple book been available in 2017 dual integrity could have been much better respected, which suggests that one fruitful avenue for historical organization studies is to work with our conceptual framing and with the detailed histories that mastery of the archives can produce. A single person does not have to

do all the work and a division of labour, whether explicit or implicit, that is respectfully constructed can do much to advance dual integrity. There are many such admirable histories available that can be data for organization scholars.

A history of the present

There are many impediments to achieving dual integrity in organization studies. The most basic are assumptions about the ontology of cause and how to capture it epistemologically. Habermas (1972) wrote about knowledge interests. The knowledge interest in control has been accumulated over time in the field now known as organization studies. There are historical as well as contemporary reasons for this interest. The history of the present, Michel Foucault once remarked, is 'a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (1982: 208). We presume you as readers will be subjects of business schools much like those that employ the authors (Maclean, Harvey and Clegg, 2017). The business school, historically, had humble origins, in commercial colleges and trade schools, as a part of vocational education, before it was instituted as a part of the University of Pennsylvania in 1881. Once incorporated in the institution of the University it became a part of an institutional nexus being forged from ideas about what constituted science, the professions and research. The origins of modern industrial capitalism in the United States are rooted in the last quarter of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century. Part of that history was the colonization of capitalism's intermediary functionaries, the managers, by engineering discourse that promised to instil efficiency, equity and industrial harmony. The professional rhetoric of the new managerial project was largely constituted in terms of norms of technical rationality. The key conceptual idea of efficiency was one that readily translated seamlessly into the neo-classical economics and economic rationalism that would later come to dominate the business schools in the 1980s.

Management as a *profession* offered the promise of 'scientific modernity' – a rationally ordered world, populated by rational individuals, capable of scientific analysis and modelling that could be put to practical use in conducting the affairs of men (all the early texts concerned with management students assumed that they would be men). In the conception of the 19th century founders of the business school model, management as a profession would become an occupation that could claim both exclusive *expertise* in and an *ethical* ground for *efficiency in practice*. The expertise, especially after the widely circulated rhetoric of F.W. Taylor (1911), was to be premised on a rationality conceived as if it was a science, while the ethical dimension of professionalism would derive from that science being applied in the service of efficiency.

The narratives of Taylorist rational efficiency were forged in a crucible in which control was sought over contingent variables that could be manipulated to enhance organizational outcomes of various sorts. There was a history, of sorts, to scientific management's manipulation of independent variables such as illumination (Hassard, 2012) in a causal context that strove to be experimental, using systematic variance to discover what became known much later, more broadly, as 'best practice'. Thinking of phenomena in this way prioritizes those variables that can be held to account, that can be manipulated, that can make a difference. To do so is to privilege a very specific conception of causality in which phenomena have to be seen to be related; must be seen to be related significantly and, importantly, be subject to managerial control. That managerial control could be equated with efficiency was a notion that suffered repeated blows during the Depression era, but the Second World War revived it in its all-American guise.

The Second World War had a profound effect on the institutions of American life, including the business school. The United States won the war, it was widely assumed, because its forces were not just overwhelming and unblooded by campaigns on the Eastern Front, as were the German troops they faced, but because of the organizational expertise and precision of the planning for the Normandy landings. Moreover, while the other armies made some use of new social science techniques of personnel selection and training, none did so with the energy, efficiency, the sheer scale of resources, of the United States. From this energy and these investments, new research topics, approaches and funding developed rapidly, and massive new organizations mobilizing millions of people were constructed and experienced. In the post-war era, the realization was that the new society of the 'organization man' (Whyte 1960) required a commitment to technically rational management if it were to function effectively. Not surprisingly, many officers in the military assumed office in the corporations.

In the 1950s, the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation deployed extensive rhetorical and pecuniary resources in building a commitment in elite business schools to research-based, social science, quantitative disciplinary knowledge. Major book-length reports were published in 1959. Science was on the agenda and the new science was to be behavioural. The times they were a-changing.

The times that were changing had historical specificity. In the English language, historical lags in translation from the German had made Max Weber's (1922; 1924; 1946; 1947; 1978) early twentieth century posthumous writings late arriving foundations for post-war studies of organizations (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips, 2006). His ideas became largely known in departments of sociology, where his ideas flourished in 1950s typological analyses of organizations (Gouldner, 1954). By the 1960s, Weber's interpretative and historically

comparative sociology was increasingly challenged by theories of the social system (Parsons, 1951), with its functional prerequisites and pattern variables, much better suited to the new science.

Science, the new science, was to be shown off at best through statistical data, factor analysis and regression equations. These were the foundations of the knowledge that put the business schools on a more professional and scientific footing, by widespread recruitment of behavioural scientists from psychology, political science and economics, among other disciplines. The new science cast the die in favour of conceptions of causality in which ontogenetic conceptions inhering in either the essence of a phenomenon or its history, were marginal (Khurana, 2007). The trajectory of business school development in an Anglosphere that was becoming ever more neo-liberal from the 1980s onwards ensured that quaint concerns with the history of phenomena remained, by and large, marginal. Henceforth, Max Weber and his heirs, for whom comparative histories were vital, were largely to be found elsewhere or, if the originals were cited, reduced to elements in 'classical theory' whose analyses of specific historical tendencies of bureaucracy, in Weber's case, were interpreted as essential, contingent dependent variable features of all organizations (Pugh and Hickson, 1976). Cross-sectional causality allowed for control of organizational design by adjusting the variables much as the Hawthorne researchers adjusted the levels of illumination. Causality, conceived in terms of spatially and temporally proximate variables, can be controlled and manipulated. To be able to exercise this control is important for any aspect of organizational design, at whatever level, be it psychological, organizational or strategic.

Structural causality, whether historical, ontogenetic or naturally tendential, is a very different concept to that of cross-sectional causality. Except in science fiction and those polities,

organizations and forms of governmentality based on the possibility of such fictions, present designs cannot be redrawn in any causal way that controls the past as a manipulable variable. The past in the present can be undone by contestations based on other accounts; hence the importance of censorship in certain forms of organizational and other politics. The past *can* be made an open book; turning the page, consulting another source, gaining another interpretation makes the past as infinite and as malleable as ingenuity will allow. It *cannot* be controlled in a simulacrum of physics envy. Hence, all that enter into historical approaches to organizations should leave notions of synchronous causality at the threshold. What is distinctive about the historical perspective is a conception of causality that is structural or genealogical. To articulate the challenge of dual integrity, causality has to be conceptually mapped and tapped through deep immersion in the historical constitutions of the field.

A history of the future? A current research agenda for Historical Organization Studies

On the presumption that (a), the interest in control can be relaxed in favour of an interest in scholarship *per se*, scholarship that is disinterested in being a managerial accessory and (b), that such scholarship can be founded on non-presentist conceptions of causality, possibilities can be sketched for future research. These possibilities concern historical shifts in physical proximity, defined as 'the probability of people being in the same location during the same period of time' (Monge and Kirste, 1980: 110), whereby organizational proximity is 'the extent to which people in an organization share the same physical locations at the same time providing an opportunity or psychological obligation to engage in face-to-face communication' (Monge, Rothman, Eisenberg, Miller and Kirste, 1985: 1133). Thus defined, opportunity and psychological obligation are outcomes of proximity. The reason why people in an organization share the same physical locations at the same time is mainly to be found in task interdependence: 'the extent to which the items or elements upon which work is

performed or the work processes themselves are interrelated so that changes in the state of one element affect the state of the others' (Scott and Davis, 2007: 126-127). Especially when interdependence is sequential or reciprocal (Thompson, 2007: 54-55), workers need to be in physically proximate to perform their bodily-embedded tasks.

These spatial relations are changing. With the advance of a globalizing economy, of outsourcing and of alliances, as well as of information technologies, an increasing number of people can or must collaborate at a distance. Not only that; the assumptions that have led to internal organizational spatial relations premised on open-plan offices, hot desking and close working in small meeting rooms are increasingly questionable. These questions of distance have achieved heightened acuity with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic closing down a large part of economic activity and imposing rules of social distanciation.

Self-regulation has historically become increasingly internalized, something on which both Foucault (1977) and Elias (1982) agree. Elias argues that longer and more complex chains of interdependence between people lead to greater self-regulation. Elsewhere it has been suggested that this self-regulation may be because of enhanced proximity and visibility (Clegg and van Iterson, 2013). Where interdependence and its constraints remain invisible, the effect may be the reverse, a lessening of self-regulation. Making organizational structures more flexible and fluid, transfers regulation from the disciplines of the organization to the discipline of the self. In an age when, as a result of lockdowns and social distancing, the lack of proximity and spatial awareness of the others with whom one interacts is not just a matter of distance, as in supply chains, but also social distance that strives to minimize contiguity. These social changes, contingent on the pandemic spread of the corona virus, opens possibilities for increasingly less self-regulated behaviour to occur, characterized by

increasing levels of abuse, bullying and anger. These behaviours may be prompted by the increasing amounts of locked-down time together endured by people who might be better served by spatial and temporal separation (Cormack, 2020). They might also be a result of the increasing intermediation of social interaction by online channels.[1] Social distancing and its frustrations are also leading to increasing anti-social behaviour.[2] Indeed, in some jurisdictions, performative anger at the loss of liberties that state regulation of social distancing entails, has created graphic images of armed insurrection entering forcefully into state assemblies that belie Weber's (1978) conception of the state as an organization with the legitimate monopoly of the means of violence.

The imposition of social distancing as a form of self-regulation in a time of pandemic creates the conditions for a natural historical comparative experiment. Has the virtual university created almost overnight led to increased or diminished civility in terms of interactions between students and between staff and students? How do these effects vary across different countries? Isolating and working from home is not available as an option to all people. It depends on the kind of work they do; for instance, personal service work, body work and skin trades cannot be done in isolation (O'Neill, 1970; 1972). Homeless people and multi-occupancy tenancies cannot isolate. Total institutions such as prisons, cruise ships and aged care facilities cannot easily practice isolation as their design dictates congregation at key times, such as meals services.

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[1](https://www.news.com.au/national/cyber-abuse-up-by-50-percent-amid-covid19-restrictions/video/0e8534dc15a01707ab2e065cb6a14178

[2] https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/28/846684162/what-to-do-when-people-dont-practice-social-distancing

Of course, COVID-19 opens up other avenues for research. The virus is widely argued to have spread from bats to wild animals sold in wet markets in Wuhan, where the purchasers and eaters of these animals provided hosts for the virus from which it could spread in the human population. This suggests that in a globalized world in which humans can move rapidly from one place to another, the variable development of the civilizing process in different places leaves humanity at risk from its least civilizationally self-regulating enclaves, such as wet markets, with wild animals captured for human consumption. That the consequences of this local niche in the civilizing process have produced a virus that has had the consequences of intensifying self-regulation through social distanciation, with civilizational lag forcing civilizational processes elsewhere, is indeed ironical.

Infectious disease has been 'one of the fundamental parameters and determinants of human history' (McNeill 1998: 295), the greatest single cause of death around the world, with the present pandemic no exception. The extent of the pandemic, its origin in China, and the hostility of its regime to inquiry into responsibilities and remedial actions, suggests that the civilizing process remains acutely politically disaggregated. The existence of the wet markets and their captive species is in part attributed to the marginalization of peasants from large-scale industrial agrarianism. The rise of industrial-scale farming in China and the resulting marginalization of millions of smallholder farmers has meant that, in order to survive, those farmers that have been pushed out geographically to the margins of prime farming land live and work closer to uncultivable zones such as forests, where bats – reservoirs for coronaviruses – lurk and infect the animals that they trap for sale in the market.

The COVID-19 virus has become an actant that connects those areas least civilizationally self-regulated with the furthest reaches of the civilizational process. The pandemic will

accelerate or accentuate aspects of the civilizational processes it has made problematic. Britain's brief dalliance with herd immunity and the survival of the fittest philosophy that lay behind it; the increasing use of lockdown and social isolation; random acts of violence in resistance to self-regulation, through individual coughing and spitting in anger through to widespread armed and organized civil disobedience in the United States, demonstrate that there is much historical unevenness to be explained in the civilizing process (see van Krieken, 2019).

Beck (1992) published *The Risk Society* in the wake of Chernobyl; since that time the veracity of his thesis that contemporary risks are global and respect no boundaries, has been validated by the effects of Tsunamis, volcanic ash clouds and most recently, the effects of COVID-19. These events are examples of existential threats: they threaten life itself on a global scale. The Commission for the Future has reported that 'The coronavirus pandemic, with its demand for unified global action, also presents an unprecedented chance for humanity to combine in solving its other shared threats'.[3] More than an opportunity for learning, COVID-19 offers also a wake-up call in relation to the necessity to prepare to deal with existential threats that can be plausibly foreshadowed but not forecasted (Hewson, 2020).

The experience of the current global pandemic has revealed another important limitation of our current practices and theorizing. COVID-19 was not a completely unexpected event: the WHO had alerted world governments to the likelihood of a pandemic, especially in the aftermath of the SARS and MERS epidemics of the past decade. Moreover, even before

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[3] (Commission for the Human Future, http://www.humansforsurvival.org/node/86; see full report at http://humansforsurvival.org/sites/default/files/CHF_Roundtable_Report_March_2020.pdf)

COVID-19, contemporary society had known the devastating effect of HIV caused AIDS, a 'slow-burn' pandemic, causing tens of millions of fatalities around the planet.

Events such as COVID-19 are hardly 'Black Swan" events (Taleb 2007), i.e. events which have enormous impact but are also very rare. They are predictable surprises (Watkins and Bazerman, 2003). Pandemics should not be unexpected; they have happened in the past and they will doubtless occur in the future, even if we do not know when. What makes a phenomenon like COVID-19 problematic in terms of risk assessment is not the fact that it is totally unpredictable, but rather that neither the specific characteristics of the phenomenon nor exactly when it might occur can be forecast based on past trends. Trends are by their very nature retrospective in character as we review their causes by looking back to their origins. This high degree of uncertainty makes traditional risk management techniques, based on quantitative assessment and assumptions of linear causality, worthless.

If there are unprecedented opportunities for humanity to combine in the face of these threats, as the Commission for the Human Future suggests, they can only be achieved through organizational capabilities (Baker, 2020). However, much of organizational risk management is ritual in the face of endemic uncertainty about *what* will happen, *where* and *when,* as Pierides, Clegg and Cuhna (2020) argue with reference to emergency management services. Invariably, it is planning for the events of prior emergencies rather than the unknown unknowns of the future.

Many developed countries, such as the UK and USA, had developed very sophisticated pandemic response plans, based on the stockpiling of medical materials and the preparation of detailed protocols of actions. Yet, in the last couple of decades, various political pressures (ranging from calls for reducing public expenditures, to the need to signal discontinuity with

previous governments) have led to dismantling of these risk management systems. The obvious consequence is that these countries have been severely affected by the virus diffusion. By contrast, countries which had directly suffered the effects of the SARS and MERS epidemics have arguably been much better prepared to deal with the threat, greatly reducing the first impact of the pandemic.

Management capabilities for coping with surprise and uncertainty on a system redefining scale should not be reduced to planning and compliance; but should be understood as a suite of individual, organizational and inter-organizational knowledges, practices and attitudes developed historically. This understanding prompted a group of scholars within the field of historical organization studies to launch an essay competition in March 2020 inviting responses to the question 'what lessons can history provide to companies and managers currently coping with the impact of COVID-19?' Forty-one essays were received, and the best six papers published online. The winner, Siobhan Nelson, of the University of Toronto, in a wide-ranging study of the treatment of infectious diseases, draws three lessons from the history of nursing: first, go back to the basics of hygiene and infection control; second, innovate in the face of a new disease and third, prioritize support for front-line staff before, during and after a pandemic (Nelson, 2020). The need is to sustain robust healthcare systems. These systems, however, require a constant investment to be created, maintained and renewed. As such systems imply conspicuous investments, it is necessary to consider the need to maintain both their legitimacy and support. The more developed and sophisticated the system is, the more legitimacy its maintenance will require, which can be particularly problematic, if its necessity is not perceived (Watkins and Bazerman, 2003).

Changes in social conceptions of distance are already emerging in post-virus China. Human contact is being minimized in service organizations; social relations are being authoritatively organized, medicalized and sanitized with wipes, mask and thermometers; spaces in which multiple occupancies occur are being deep cleaned (Moritz, 2020). Building and maintaining a collective capacity to manage the implications of catastrophic but unlikely risks requires a consideration of a range of social and organizational issues, such as how social networks and global chains of interdependence operate and change historically over time, transforming the nature of power relations. The most fundamental aspects of being human, how we relate intimately to each other, are being challenged by responses to a mute coronavirus.

The implications of pandemic threats are well known. Chen, Lau Woo and Yuen (2007) warned of the likelihood of the COVID-1, known as SARS, reappearing. They concluded their analysis by saying that:

> 'Coronaviruses are well known to undergo genetic recombination …, which may lead to new genotypes and outbreaks. The presence of a large reservoir of SARS-CoV-like viruses in horseshoe bats, together with the culture of eating exotic mammals in southern China, is a time bomb. The possibility of the re-emergence of SARS and other novel viruses from animals or laboratories and therefore the need for preparedness should not be ignored' (Chen et al., 2007: 683).

The existence of scientific knowledge is insufficient to overcome various vulnerabilities of organizational sensemaking, including psychological dispositions, organizations' strategic preparedness and the political interests of organizational elites (Weick, 1995). That this is the case is especially evident at the level of state organization. The capacity of the state within differing political cultures, how quotidian community relations change and reflect ideologies

about national identity and culture, as well as the role that technology plays in everyday life, all contribute to the kind of society we design through processes of inclusion and exclusion. The history of the organizational future is being accelerated now, as these words are being written. At its very centre will be profound questions about civilizing processes, social regulation and their organization that will predicate the history of the future.

Two actants; two major social disruptors. First, the East India Company, wreaking havoc on ancient civilizations in India (and in China with its trade in opium). In many ways, its effects were akin to a long-lasting virus in its impact on bodies, individual, political and cultural, causing inter-generational anarchy in those regimes it transformed. Second, another actant, this time a virus proper, that jumped species, upended much of the world, questioning the extent of civilizing processes, throwing institutions and organizations into disarray and posing major issues with which organizational history might engage. A few of the issues that arise have been lightly sketched. What is evident in all of the issues sketched is that the effects of these chains of asynchronous causality cannot be thought of other than in their historical sense; they are matters that impinge deeply on current taken-for-granted notions of what regulation through selves, organizations and institutions entail in a global world. These taken-for-granted notions have been laminated historically and are being tested and deconstructed immediately.

Conclusion

By the time this book is read, its readers will be living and making these future histories. To echo a memorable phrase, they will be doing so under circumstances not of their choosing but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 1852). That is how futures are made. There is an element of 'living up to the past' in composing new

futures, re-imagining and elaborating what has gone before, but also, and at times concomitantly, an element of breaking with the past (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince and Golant, 2014). What will be most interesting, to recall Marx once more, will be the extent to which the spirits of the past are conjured up, their slogans intact, in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language or the extent to which these are superseded by a 'new dawn' (Wordsworth, 1850).

Interest in the impact of differing temporal spans on organizations and organizing is growing (Schultz and Hernes, 2013), offering fertile ground for the development of historical organization studies. The temporal depths that shape organizational becoming have the power to upset conventional ordering, as Durepos and Vince point out in this volume, engendering nonlinear narratives that suggest new relationships with past, present and future and the interplay between them. Under such circumstances, 'the logical carapace of Time is attacked; there is no longer a chrono-logy (if we may separate the two parts of the word)' (Barthes, 1986: 281). This creates the potential for 'the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years… to grow confused, and to break its ranks' (Proust, 1981[1954]: 5). The re-ordering or shifting of elements occasioned in this way brings to the surface deep structures normally hidden from view. The cultural substrata that underpin organizations and societies run deep, serving as powerful impediments to, or enablers of, change. Like slow-moving glaciers, incremental change at this sedimentary level is difficult to discern. In delving into distant pasts, whether that of the East India Company or of eighteenth-century church governance, we uncover not only crucible events but traces of the deeper institutional and historical processes that gave rise to them, extending the scope of explication. It is our hope in compiling this book that it will serve as a guide to signpost the way to the multifarious potentialities or 'efflorescences'

that lie ahead (White, 1973), pointing the way to new worlds of enchantment. We wish its readers every success in their forays into historical organization studies that beckon.

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