Crossing chronotopes in the polyphonic organisation: Adventures in Experience

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Abstract

The 'Polyphonic Organisation' is an emerging root-metaphor for the multiple voices that constitute an organisation. In this article, we explore the narrative concept of the 'chronotope' as a feature of the 'polyphonic organisation'. The 'chronotope', in a general sense, refers to the matrix of time-space-value in organisations. We argue that the chronotope is important because it introduces boundaries between voices within organisations and helps to explain the difficulties in getting to dialogue with voices in different spaces in the 'Polyphonic Organisation'. More particularly, there are multiple kinds of chronotopes which lead to different kinds of time-spaces matrices within the polyphonic organisation. Our aim is to examine chronotope crossings within polyphonic organisations as part of the work of being heard. This is a theoretical argument drawing significantly from Bakhtin's work on chronotope. To examine the argument in practice we draw on original fieldwork within the comedy industry. Here we found three kinds of chronotopes: 1) The comedy-offense boundary; 2) The commissioning landscape 3) Platform spaces. We also found that moving within and between these involved a variety of adventures in experience (such as hope and disappointment), which also have their own specific chronotopes. Overall, we argue that the polyphonic organisation is significantly enhanced as an organisational concept through a turn to the role of chronotope. This is because chronotope helpfully describes the barriers and porous boundaries between voices.

Crossing chronotopes in the polyphonic organisation: A dialogical analysis of the comedy industry

Organisation studies, at least in its narrative turn, has fallen for the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin: the polyphonic organisation (e.g., Hazen, 1993), the heteroglossic organisation (Rhodes, 2001), chronotopes (e.g., Pederson, 2009), Czarniawska's (2004) description of narrative, storytelling organisations (Boje, 2008) and dialogic identity (Beech, 2008) all testify to the increasing popularity of his *oeuvre* in organisation studies. This popularity, in itself, resonates with Bakhtin's (1990) insistence that art (his study of the novel) and life (e.g., organizations) are answerable to one another, meaning that it is possible to use the study of the novel as a means of understanding organisations because life itself is aesthetic. However, despite a vast array of work on Bakhtin, relatively little has been done to synthesise his concepts in organisation studies. Boje (2008) for instance, treats polyphony and chronotope as separate 'strategy stories' while work on the polyphonic organisation makes no mention of chronotope (with the exception of Pederson, 2009). We also identify a lack of attention to 'being heard' in a polyphonic organisation as an experience and a lack of detail with regard to crossing from one chronotope to another.

Chronotopes are the "organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). Literally, the word means 'time-space' but, crucially, how these are experienced as containing values, feelings and emotions. To give some examples: The genre 'on the road' is characterised by chance encounters, strange places, adventures and life-changing moments. Time is condensed into tests of character, epic moments of decision-making and moments of ultra-significance. In contrast, a 'country idyll' is marked by particular places – the church, the school, the farms - and time slow, cyclical and routine - the weekly service, the school semesters, sowing and harvesting. Holquist (2002) makes the point that chronotopes have both a transhistorical and culturally specific sense. Transhistorically, chronotopes can be used a bit like motifs such that the 'Greek adventure' is not just applicable to Greece. They also have a culturally specific meaning in which, for instance, a particular place, e.g. Paris in the 18th century, or ancient Greece has its own motions of time, space and value.

Chronotope belongs in the broader narrative tradition in organisations studies (e.g., Bryant & Cox, 2004; Downing, 1977; Rhodes, 2001) and challenges narrative methods to consider time in relation to specific spaces. Pederson (2009), for instance, outlines a number of chronotopes and their significance for change in a health care setting. These include 'meetings', 'the office ward' and 'the patient room'. In this sense, Pederson (2009) uses chronotope as culturally specific. In Pederson's (2009) words:

> The stories show how the unit is understood and discussed differently in different places in organisations: seen from the 'patient road', the unit allows less time for patients, seen from the 'meeting salon', the unit is a great opportunity for the new students, seen from the 'local' office, it entails a busier everyday life'. (p.402).

She also draws on transhistorical literary chronotopes, to discuss how they lead to different organizational consequences, understood as a 'polyphony' of different voices. For instance, the idyll and romantic story can mobilize management by presenting organisational change as a positive while the realist story gives protagonists more options in their every-day decision-making.

One of the most systematic efforts to catalogue transhistorical chronotopes in organisation studies comes from Boje, Hayley, Saylors (in press) who have outlined eight different chronotopes that characterise organisations. These include 'Romance –Adventure'; 'Everyday Adventure', 'Chivalric Romance', 'Biographical and Autobiographical'; 'Historic Inversion', 'Rogue-clown-fool', 'Rabelaisian Purge' and 'Collective Life'. They outline how each of these chronotopes structure organisations. For example, in the 'Romance Adventure', organisations battle environmental foes which reveals organisational purpose and the organisation life force to achieve this purpose (we outline more detail on the other chronotopes as we employ them within the paper).

There has been increasing attention in organisation studies to the 'polyphonic organisation' (e.g., Belova, King, & Silwa, 2008; Letiche, 2010; Matula, Badham, and Miesiek, 2013), but chronotope generally does not feature in this work. Hazen (1993) popularised the concept of polyphony in organisation studies by suggesting that polyphony refers to the variety of voices that lie behind any organisation. While some voices may be silenced within a singular vision, these peripheral voices may lead to organisational change simply by being different. Since Hazen (1993), however, the concept of polyphony has become polyphonic with subtly different meanings emerging in the literature. For instance, Anderson (2003) argues that a polyphonic organization is one that has grown beyond its original communication code (e.g., in

education when the 'learning organization' or 'life-long learning' is added to the original codification of 'the child' in need of education). On the other hand, Belova, King and Silway (2008) suggest that polyphony refers to the idea that the organisation means different things from different perspectives.

These descriptions of polyphony converge in emphasising narrative, multiplicity, and fluidity in understanding organisations. They also touch on other Bakhtinian concepts in the narrative tradition in organisation studies such as the 'heteroglossic organisation' (Rhodes, 2001), where knowledge, rather than voice, is seen as diverse. Consistent with our aim of placing chronotope and polyphony in dialogue with each other, we suggest that chronotope helps to account for a permeable structure amidst fluidity within organisations: that is, different voices are separated by different chronotopes. It is not just that voices have different status in organisations, as Letiche (2010) and Rhodes (2001) suggest, which accounts for the 'subaltern' or unheard voices. It is that they occupy different locations and that a different sense of time is attached to these different spaces. Crossing, or visiting, different chronotopes is, of course, possible (e.g., management by walking around) but the dialogues that mark polyphony are stratified by chronotope. Pederson's (2009) study illustrates this, although she does not consider how chronotope can be crossed within the polyphonic organisation.

More generally, structural constraints within an organisation make the more prescriptive aspects of polyphony difficult to achieve, for instance that organisational leaders ought to 'translate' communication codes, listen attentively to others, and honour diversity so that voices are not silenced (Clegg, Korngerger, Carter, & Rhodes, 2006; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008). For Bakthin (1981), crossing chronotopes, can be presented as a character test, on the one hand, but also appears to be a test which takes place against structural constraints. And voicing concerns tends to be conceptualised within the literature on the polyphonic organisation as forcible resistance. For example, Carter et al. (2002) use the case-study of the Liverpool Dockers strike to argue that the internet allowed new organisational networks which brought in voices that translated into successful strike action. Using the language of chronotope, voices can be marshalled as part of a broader power struggle and these networks of resistance can disrupt and change the every-day 'business as usual' time-space of the organisation. We are interested in more mundane ways in which stakeholders seek to cross chronotope in an organisation and to examine the kind of work that this entails.

Anecdotes and soundbites from the Comedy Industry

To explore this aim further, we will bring in some illustrative anecdotes and 'soundbites' from our fieldwork in the comedy industry. The reason we chose the comedy industry for this paper is solely one of convenience – as we have original data that speaks to the theoretical concern outlined here. This fieldwork involved short interviews (between five and seven minutes long) with ten different participants at a networking event for those who work in or aspire to work in the television comedy industry. This fieldwork is particularly pertinent to our theoretical argument because the interviews revolve around the difficulties, successes and failures of being heard by the relevant Broadcasting channels – in other words, being commissioned. It is possible to exemplify and reflect upon what it means to cross or hope to cross from one chronotope to another through these anecdotes and soundbites.

We did not do a systematic analysis of the sort outlined by Spradley (1980) or Strauss and Corbin (1994). Instead, we followed the dialogical analysis style outlined by Sullivan (2012). The emphasis here is on 'key moments' in the data – key for the theoretical argument and read as key for the participant also by extension. For this reason, in our presentation of the data, we refer to 'anecdotes' and 'soundbites' rather than themes per se – as we deliberately eschewed themes, with their connotation of a bottom-up analysis, in favour of key moments. In some ways, the data presented here resembles the 'creative non-fiction flash narratives' outlined by Saylors, Boje, Mueller (2014). 'Flash narratives' are those that throw light on an issue like a flash, illuminate in a flash of insight, and allows one to read in a flash 'without the poetics of narrative' (p.6). While this is the intended effect of the method of presentation, the effect is not generalizable to the comedy industry as a whole (as the data is too limited for this) but instead on the insights that the data throws on 'chronotope' and the 'polyphonic organisation' as theoretical concepts.

The rest of the paper is presented in three sections: (i) the comedy-offense boundary; (ii) the commissioning landscape; and, (iii) platforms for comedy. These are particularly interesting in terms of our argument because they are all metaphorical spaces that stakeholders at the production side aspire to target effectively and stay within. Each of these also has an associated set of values and of time – and for this reason we refer to them as kinds of culturally specific chronotopes that are unique to this study. We will also talk of more generic, transhistorical chronotopes that are relevant to organisations and particularly Boje et al's (in press) classification of chronotopes discussed earlier. When we talk of

'crossing chronotopes' in the polyphonic organisation, we are referring specifically to culturally specific chronotopes – that is crossing in and out of the comedy-offense boundary, the commissioning landscape and platforms for comedy.

(i) The comedy-offense boundary

It is common to see a description of comedy as 'carnivalesque' (e.g. Medhurst, 2005). Bakhtin (1984) argues that carnival involves a peculiar kind of chronotope embodied by a popular 'folk spirit' where normal life is suspended, including hierarchical distances between people, and a frank exchange occurs. Authority is de-crowned, we become aware of the laughing side of things, and there is a profound and collective engagement with alternative 'truths', e.g., to see death or religion as humorous as well as serious. As such, 'taboo-breaking' and 'truth-telling' are central to carnival. So, in the value-laden atmosphere of joviality, distance is suspended and biographical time is dissolved in a collective experience of shared, momentary laughter. Drawing on this more particularly for organisations, Boje, Hayley and Saylors (in press) refer to the 'rogue-clown-fool' chronotope where the public square is transformed to public spectacle and the 'Rabelaisian purge' chronotope where grotesque humor is used to reframe and renew world views – in what is traditionally known as 'radical-change' approaches in organisation studies.

By turning conventions upside-down, the comedy world has the potential to be offensive in this 'grotesque humor' for example through legitimising abuse under the guise of joviality (e.g., Billig, 2005; Stallybrass & White, 1986). And, even when such comedy is ironic and taboo breaking in intention, it can be interpreted anthemically as truth-telling and cheered along to - such as David Brent making sexist comments in 'The Office'. In our first extract, we bring this theoretical debate down to the ground of lived experience as Jack (all participant names are pseudonyms) explains his efforts to turn homelessness into comedy.

Anecdote One: A project flounders[1]

Jack situates the actual activities of working as a comedy writer in space and time, although this is interestingly vague:

Jack (writer/comedian)[2]: …A few years ago I pitched an idea to X in London about two homeless guys. It was basically a love story. These two guys fall in love. It's not necessarily a gay thing. They just fall in love. They almost become soul-mates really. One guy at V loved it but we found that when we went to pitch it people knew it was about homeless people and so it was automatically put to one side. They said 'you can't really make jokes about homeless people'. That's the feedback we were getting. We explained we weren't making jokes about homeless people. It's about the characters and the relationship they have (...) it was still a taboo that you couldn't tackle at that time.

It occurred in 'London' and 'a few years ago'. The anecdote however closes with an assessment of the *moral* landscape at that particular point: 'it was still a taboo you couldn't tackle at that time'. In Boje, Hayley and Saylor's classification, transformation of the public square to public spectacle through the 'rogue-clown-fool' chronotope was blocked by moral rules. This implies that not only is the boundary in risk-taking comedy indeterminately located in moral space, it may also take up variable locations across historical time. And the unanchored nature of the boundary is amplified in this extract through the vagueness of the scene-setting and through the disputed topic being, itself, homelessness. However, some stakeholders are imputed the power to define which topics are too risky for comedy and Jack describes the idea as having been blocked in this regard 'automatically'. From this comedy writer's point of view then, the landscape entered when pitching his risky comedy idea is saturated with insecurity, and failure - described through the spatial metaphor of being 'put to one side' - forecloses the possibility of progressing into a future. Acceptance of a risky comedy idea and being persuaded of its merits is articulated in a romantic genre: 'One guy at V *loved* it'. However, the definitive negative response of the others appears to anticipate that the comedy will cause offense: 'They said you can't really make jokes about homeless people'. Jack accentuates 'love' over 'offense' for the 'commissioning editors': 'We explained we weren't making jokes about homeless people. It's about the characters and the relationship they have'. However, the attempt to persuade the commissioning editors that the work falls into the comedy zone fails insofar as the comedy is not commissioned.

There appears to be a wide array of moral rules and emotional work associated with turning offense into comedy or occupying the ambivalent chronotope of carnival. We can see some of these, such as' intelligence', 'fear', 'rights' in our data presented as a table of soundbites (Sullivan, 2012).

Table 1: Soundbites: Comedy and offense

Bob (teaches/writes comedy)	I don't think any topic in comedy is out of bounds, and that's something I stress to the students, but it's how you deal with it and having intelligence behind it.
Ted (comedy writer/actor)	I think the riskier the better. I think that's what would get noticed in the crowd.
Bob (teaches/writes comedy)	I tell you I can't go through a week without paedophile being mentioned and it's taken very lightly in a lot of ways even though it's such a serious thing.
Al (independent producer)	Paedophile school teacher is probably a little bit- a long step too far.
Jo (female developer)	(However) some of the best kind of comedy comes from real risk-taking.
Ted (comedy writer/actor)	(But) people are scared to mimic minorities, to make fun of ethnicity.
Dave (producer)	(And) if they offend me without earning the right to do so, I won't love them.

A boundary demarcates a potential crossing point or line between territories. Traversing the boundary therefore has significance and needs to be managed, particularly when the exact location of the boundary is not clear. There are no clear rules about how to cross into the comedy zone, with many aspiring comedians competing to be heard. Ted suggests that it is important to 'get noticed in the crowd' and the riskier the better. However, Bob implies that the potential novelty or shock value of this is undermined by the ubiquity of transgressive comedy in that one 'can't go through a week without paedophile being mentioned'. Bob argues instead for a different means through which risky, offensive material can enter the comedy zone and transform into humour - specifically 'having intelligence behind it'. In other words, pushing offensive material into the zone of comic material is aided by it being self-aware and meaningful. This distinction in the value of different boundary crossing strategies is echoed in Jo's lauding of 'real' risk-taking which, though undefined, implies a similar constellation of clever, innovative, and productive. Dave places a moral imperative on comedy to 'earn the right' to offend, hence differentiating between justifiable and unjustifiable, merely offensive, transgressions. This is particularly interesting insofar as Dave is a development producer and therefore one of the voices that Bob, Al and Jo would wish to talk to and be heard by, but none of these participants frame risk-taking in terms of 'earning the right' to offend.

More generally, there appears to be a lot of emotional work involved in moving from or between offense and comedy. Stakeholders were described as motivated by both fear ('people are scared') and ambition ('get noticed'), could be praised for their intelligence and courage ('real risk-taking') or criticised for their flippancy ('taken very lightly'). In terms of chronotope, this particular expression 'taken lightly' is also noteworthy insofar as it suggests a qualitative distinction between material in the offensive world – being heavy – and in the comic world - transformed to being light. The producer, Dave, also specified two emotionally-intense responses to boundary transgression on him personally and, as an extension, potentially on the audience: the negative affectivity associated with 'offence' and the positive affectivity of 'love'. Hence, a dialogue is operative in which the creators of comedy have to navigate a boundary, the crossing of which they anticipate may give offense but which can be mitigated through a reception that imputes to it qualities such as intelligence and courage and may, hence, be loved. The future, here, is uncertain. Nobody can anticipate how the audience will react to a particular joke - even an audience of commissioning editors. Some writers circle around the same risks (e.g., 'paedophilia') and the moral and emotional work to get the commissioners to love the comedy and move the project forward does not always succeed. Presumably, this work will be made more difficult by the temporary quality of comedy, where from one moment to the next a joke stops being funny.

The polyphonic organisation is commonly defined as a variety of voices telling different stories and we are interested in how chronotopes are crossed within organisational contexts and the kind of work this entails. So far, we have seen that this involves making judgements around the boundary between what is within the organisation (e.g., being funny) and what is outside (e.g., being offensive). The judgement is not cognitive alone, but also based on emotion: the fear of taking risks; earning the moral right to offend, convincing producers that a taboo (e.g., homelessness) is ready for comedy. The task for those wishing to be heard in the organisation – outside of their own chronotope - is to move out of a singular world of offense and into a world of ambiguous truth-telling/taboo-breaking humour. That is, to move into a dominant

chronotope of ambiguity within the 'comedy world'. However, the comedy industry regulates and gate keeps this chronotope and nobody is entirely sure whether a particular instance of comedy conforms to it or not. This leads to emotional work in overcoming fear of offense and getting producers to 'love' what could be offensive and some moral work in 'earning the right' to offend, possibly through making it also clever or having a good track record.

(ii) The commissioning landscape

Between the writer and the public lies a range of individuals such as talent scouts and commissioning editors whose job it is to create a product for consumption (Mills, 2009). Leurdijk (2006) suggests that commissioning editors in large public sector broadcasters attempt to overcome demographic and cultural differences by presenting a light-hearted treatment of 'universal' experiences such as death, birth, friendship. On the other hand, Friedman (2014) describes how talent scouts, for example at the Edinburgh fringe, mediate between comedians and audience in terms of 'high-brow' and 'low-brow'. This demonstrates how the commissioning editors and talent-scouts shape the comedy landscape (chronotope) along horizontal (communal experiences and shared spaces) and vertical planes (high- and low-brow) and arrange its voices (polyphony) in promoting selected talent. In doing so, they interpret the moral rules around 'transgressive comedy' outlined in the previous section.

From the perspective of organisation chronotopes, commissioning editors speak to the 'chivalric adventure' where abstract ideologies (e.g. what is good comedy) structure organisational adventures (looking for talent), traversing history and initiating noble quests (getting the talent onto the screen). (Boje, Haley and Sayors, in press). We now examine this chronotope in more detail to examine how our participants cross into the path of the 'chivalric adventure' and navigate the commissioning editor's landscape, commencing with a table of soundbites.

Table 2: Soundbites: Commissioning editors

Ken (producer)	Risk-taking isn't a problem. I'm a huge risk-taker. The reluctance I've found is with the commissioners to try new companies.
Ted (comedy writer/actor)	They are asking for risks from actors, writers and producers but they also need to take risks as companies themselves.
John (development producer)	(However) a risky development strategy is not developing the things that commissioners are looking for (…) saying to someone now you <u>said</u> you're looking for this but you'll like <u>this</u>.
Jo (female developer)	We talk to commissioners <u>all</u> the time. We're talking to them all the time so we have a good sense I <u>think</u> of what commissioners are looking for all across the different channels.
Dave (producer)	We have been fortunate to work with commissioners and channels who trust in the scripts we deliver and once they are commissioned trust that we will put the vision of the writer on the screen.
John (development producer)	(But) you've got a project that one day it looks like it going to get the green light and the next day your champion is gone. So they really create the drama of the work.

There are different views (a polyphony of narratives) on the process of commissioning. For Ken, commissioning editors are reluctant to take on new companies and for Ted they need to do more to take on risks themselves. For Dave, the commissioners trust the producer to put the vision of the writer on the screen but, for Jo, it is the commissioning editor's vision that is important and that one must tap this vision by talking to them constantly. According to John, it is risky to try to convince commissioning editors that they want something and they can also create a 'drama' by leaving suddenly (i.e., moving to a competitor). Madill and Sullivan (2012) refer to this as 'adventure-time'. Nothing stays still – not even the sense of what is good comedy – and being in adventure time means keeping in the conversation so that, like Jo, one has 'a good sense [...] of what commissioners are looking for'. In terms of 'chivalric adventure' 'space', internal dispositions make an impact on the comedy landscape. Ken tells us that he is a 'huge' risk-taker but finds the commissioning editors to be conservative. And Jo's strategy of staying within the confines of the commissioner's comedy space mirrors this in being relatively low-risk. Hence, in this 'chivalric adventure' chronotopes –in which future events are shaped by the test of character that the hero undergoes – the writers' and developers' 'champion' (i.e., commissioning editor) is perceived to be dominant, risk-adverse, and capricious.

The following extract provides an example of the huge, idiosyncratic influence of commissioning editors on the comedy landscape. Jack describes how he eventually won over some commissioning editors and how this turned out to have less to do with their orientation to risk but with their geographical location and related capacity to hear his voice.

Anecdote Two: Setting a comedy up north

Jack (writer/comedian):	I'd been working in London for 8 or 9 years pitching ideas and this is the first thing I've done set outside London. I've been close to getting development with other things but this is the first thing I set about the people I know or at least up north. I'm from around here so it's based up here. The characters are northern and typically from Oldham and that area. It was the first thing I wrote of that ilk and it's the first thing that been picked up. Morris dancing[3] wasn't something I knew a lot about. On another TV programme I spent some time with Morris dancers and having seen their world it seemed so ripe for comedy. In terms of risk, I suppose it is a bit of a risk.
Jo (female developer):	Did anybody turn the Morris dancing idea away?
Jack (writer/comedian):	Yes I approached V and people at Y, XX who's doing a talk today and we had very brief chats about it. Z also agreed to option it as well as did W who are based in London but funnily enough all three people who wanted to do it were northern. They probably recognised something in the language that maybe other producers weren't quite getting. So that is one of the things that helped and allowed me to move forward in the process. I don't think it's a risk to set something up- up north but as soon as you say to somebody 'Morris dancing' they go 'what a brilliant idea' or they might say 'what's that got to do with me?'…

Jack makes a clear distinction between the geographical spaces of 'London' and 'up north' and connects this to geographically-defined biography in that, although he had 'been working in London', he is actually 'from around here (…) northern and typically from Oldham and that area'. Moreover, he describes his project in terms of his own geographically-defined origins: 'I'm from around here so it's based up here'. In London Jack was only 'close to getting development with other things' whereas the project set in the boundless space 'up North' is 'the first thing that been picked up'. It was picked up because the commissioning editors 'probably recognised something in the language'.

In terms of the chronotope, there is an interesting complexification of the 'chivalric romance'. 'Chivalric romance' is characteristic of the commissioning editors but 'romance adventure' is more characteristic of the hero attempting to cross into the path of the chivalric adventuring commissioning editor. In 'romance adventure' worlds built entirely on chance ("funnily enough") reveal purpose (it was the common language that was revealed). Moreover, the best that has happened is that the project has been 'option(ed)' and so is still vulnerable to the whims of powerful others and so still within 'Romance adventure' where battles are continually fought across time with no trace left in the character of the hero. Indeed, Jack implies through the repetition of 'first' many failed attempts in the past: 'I'd been working in London for 8 or 9 years pitching ideas'. Of course, Jack does develop in the real world – it is not a novel – but minimising the significance of time ('8 or 9 years') and the lack of success over this period is characteristic of the 'romance adventure' chronotope underpinning his narrative.

Getting into the commissioning editor's 'chivalric adventure' chronotope without contacts or opportunities for conversation is difficult and characterised by 'romance adventure'. There are portals, nonetheless, such as internet popularity, unsolicited scripts, or more formally, through the BBC writer's room. The public can send scripts to the writer's room with the hope of commission. However, the BBC receives a large number of scripts and they are screened before reaching a commissioning editor. And in the soundbite extract below, our participant gives an indication of the emotional risks involved.

Anecdote 3: Ripped in half

Ted (comedy writer/actor):	…I've just sent a script into BBC writers' room so we'll see how it goes. Hope it doesn't come back ripped in half.

Ted had submitted a real script to a real organization but the 'writers' room' is a metaphorical space capturing a process which takes place within and over a variety of different physical locations. However, the ability for an unsolicited script to be 'sent into', and hence enter, the 'writers' room' locates this service in the comedy landscape as a small, liminal space on the edge of the BBC which has a perceived uncharacteristically porous boundary to the outside world. In submitting his script, Ted intimates a 'romance adventure' quest narrative, setting out on a risky journey with muted courage: 'we'll see how it goes', but with anticipation of failure: 'Hope it doesn't come back ripped in half'. As in previous extracts, the salient affect in this landscape is anxious insecurity. Failure here has no rational explanation - it just 'comes back' - and so appears capricious, uncontrollable, and has no right of reply. Moreover, although 'ripped in half' is a metaphor, it captures the emotional violence experienced by the writer when a script is rejected. Hence, although the 'writers' room' offers a way into the boundaried and guarded space of a large and important broadcaster, and for some may be through feedback a transformative place, for the vast majority the risk is that it will be experienced as a painful blind alley.

(iii) Platforms for comedy

In this final section, we examine the experience of structural constraints within the organisation: here, the outlets, or platforms, for comedy. Outlets are considered to be the 'structural constraint' on the production of media and there is debate with regard to the level of agency that is possible within these limitations (e.g., see Bruun, 2010). From the point of view of chronotope and the polyphonic organisation, structural constraints can be viewed as spaces which interact with the romantic and chivalric adventure-time of the comedy industry landscape. In this interaction, the adventures may be closed down but also the 'platforms'. We limit our analysis to the specific structural constraints on which our participants focused.

John shows how different channels can be viewed as spaces within the landscape of comedy production. These channels are involve a powerful traditional compartmentalisation between different kinds of comedy spaces and demographics. They fulfil what Boje, Haley and Saylors (*in press*) refer to as 'historic inversion'. Here, 'fixed historical structures justify future decisions', as we can see in the single soundbite below:

Single Soundbite: The different channels

John (development producer):	I think BBC3 is a channel that is sort of requires more risks to be taken. It's looking at a lower demographic and a bit more irreverence and cheekiness (Interviewer: Yeah). Obviously, BBC2 takes creative risks. BBC1 is not really there to take big risks. It's the big marquis for a mainstream audience. You could say the same for ITV. ITV1 isn't going to take massive risks but ITV2 is there to take creative risks and Channel Four is <u>all</u> about taking risks and that's it raison d'etre…

Here, BBC1 and ITV are described as 'the big marquis for a mainstream audience'. The large space imputed to BBC1 and ITV is directly related to their type of viewer, here the wide 'mainstream audience', but this is a risk-averse comedy space. BBC3's more specific, narrower 'lower demographic' audience implies it to be smaller metaphorical space in the comedy landscape, but it is a space associated with greater willingness to take risks. Channels as comedy spaces are not just differentiated in size but also in terms of the kind of comedy produced within them. In being '*the* big marquis', the large, risk-averse space of BBC1 is implied to be safe but bland. The smaller space of BBC3 is characterised and catering to a 'lower demographic' which, with its resonances of lesser, suggests basic or unsophisticated, while the 'creative' risk-taking of BBC2 and ITV2 implies it to be sophisticated and innovative. Notably, these descriptions are inherently evaluative. Hence, British broadcasters as spaces in the comedy landscape are awarded differential size, content, and qualities.

In John's view, broadcasting channels compartmentalise the comedy landscape. They are personified as identifiable kinds of protagonists with particular orientations to risk- taking. Channels are also spaces providing identifiable opportunities in relation to the kinds of comedy which will be produced within them. However, John also suggests that this landscape is not static and that new spaces can open up and new players arrive on the scene. Echoing the idea of comedy being a temporary release from the every-day world, John describes below how temporary doors may open and close in terms of the platforms available for comedy. Indeed as Boje, Haley and Saylors (in press) argue, the very existence of historic structures that shape time and space present a challenge for new alternative futures and strategic actions to emerge. This is nicely illustrated in the quote below:

John (development producer): …multiplatform[4] came around and opened up doors about what- two years ago and now in that last session somebody explained a lot of those doors are closed (I: Yeah) but they weren't open before two years ago so it's only a very- and then there was talk around like Foster's opening up doors that hasn't quite materialised so I guess some of the bigger hopes of some new avenues around distribution and financial support hasn't materialised so it's not really a change as much as hopes quashed.

Here, John mobilises a new spatial metaphor of the *door*. That is, in terms of 'distribution', multiplatform '*opened up doors*' and in relation to 'financial support' there 'was talk around like Foster's *opening up doors*'. This suggests that, rather than trying to get *into* guarded spaces, these new opportunities were important in providing ways *out* of spaces in which protagonists had been confined. The term 'new avenues' extends this metaphor suggesting paths facilitating movement and progress, hence, opportunities for future developments that are free from previous infrastructure constraints. However, John situates the beginning of these opportunities as 'two years ago' and describes how, now, 'a lot of those door are closed' and that others 'didn't quite materialise'. New platforms can materialise in the platform space – which appears to lead to hope of new avenues to the public or in this case - 'hopes quashed'. Significantly, as we have seen before in relation to the boundaries of risk-taking and the characterisation of commissioning editors, the experiential landscape is one of insecurity and caprice. New opportunities appear spontaneously - just 'came around' - and seem to disappear in a haphazard way. In that sense, the historic structures of 'historic inversion' maintain their dominance.

Describing innovations through the metaphor of the open door reveals the potentially stultifying effect of configuring broadcasting channels as distinct, closed spaces in the comedy landscape. The following extract explores this further in relation to genre and to genre-defined departments as 'historic structures' of 'historical inversion' within broadcasting companies, linking this to the risk of rejection.

Jo (female developer): …I think we do struggle slightly in terms of the development of ideas and whether it's comedy or drama or comedy-drama so we often go and take things to a drama department with comedy-drama and they're not sure. If there's comedy in it we get juggled around. That's been our experience recently in terms of a few things what we've been doing. So it's hard to find the right fit with that.

Jo distinguishes between three possible genre locations for her 'ideas': 'comedy', 'drama', and 'comedy-drama'. She links these possibilities to her 'struggle' developing ideas, implying that having to place ideas with genre spaces can have a blocking effect. She extends this metaphor into literal space suggesting that it is also 'hard to find the right fit' between the 'idea' and the 'department' giving the example of a 'drama department' being uncertain about an idea 'If there's comedy in it'. Hence, not only do the different channels represent different boundaries spaces in the comedy landscape, the channels are made up of further genre-defined spaces with which one's idea must 'fit' in order to be accepted. So, again boundaried spaces linked to infrastructure design are described as have a potentially stultifying effect on both innovation and development.

The affectivity of this landscape, as we have seen before, is one of insecurity. Not 'fitting in' is infused with 'risk', is linked to 'struggle', is 'hard', and creates uncertainty – 'they're not sure'. It also means that one is likely to be 'juggled around': they are in the right chronotope for being developed but within it are shuffled around from one department to another – just like John's emotions when he engaged with the writer's room. Hence, platforms for comedy re-capitulate the carnivalesque chronotope in its internal organisation in terms of turning emotions inside-out, the juggling of ideas, and the caprice of platforms which may disappear overnight – just as commissioning editors appear to disappear.

Discussion

Our main aim in this article was to examine chronotope crossings within polyphonic organisations as part of the work of being heard. In so doing, we presented our analysis in three sections: (i) the comedy-offense boundary; (ii) the commissioning landscape; and, (iii) platforms for comedy.

We presented these separately but they interact with one another as the protagonists cross chronotopes or seek to do so. In particular, the comedy-offense boundary is re-iterated in the platform outlets, with some channels allowing a space for more 'risky' or potentially offensive comedy. Similarly, the career trajectory of the commissioning editor in biographical time interacts with the progression of a project into the space of comedy world, as it is championed or abandoned. Platform spaces also open up, like valves allowing in new voices, but can also shut out these voices – and these become entangled in participants' hopes and tactics in their pursuit of a comedy career.

We were struck in the analysis by the emotional work involved in crossing or attempting to cross chronotopes to get heard. There is work in trying to convince editors of the value of a project, in anticipating their reactions, in hoping and fearing disappointment, in losing sense of time as pitches are made over and again. For instance, the adventure of being commissioned with hope, love and disappointment; comedic value with risk of offence; different platforms with insecurity and tactics to gain security. In this regard, our work resonates with more recent reading of 'emotional labour' such as those of Burkitt (2013) and Brook (2012).

What insights has this generated in the context of organizations? Viewing the polyphonic organization as consisting of emotionally-laden voices seeking to get heard admits to the well-worn point that organizations work to silence some voices and to foreground others. When we speak of the lived experience of change in an organisational context – or the lived experience of labouring to be heard, it is possible to look at these experiences not only in terms of story-telling and narrative but as rooted in a matrix of chronotopes that configure and re-configure their narratives. This deepening of 'narrative' is important if we are to appreciate just what is involved in being heard in a polyphonic organisation and in particular the structural difficulties of being heard.

Of course, we already know that some voices are silent in a polyphony or just not heard (Hazen, 1993; Letiche, 2010). There may be portals within the organisation into this adventure chronotope but the portal is narrow and rejects a lot. In general, there is no guarantee of success. Aspiring comedians may fail the test and the chronotope of adventure might mean that their voice travels no further in time or space. Polyphony, understood as a variety of narratives and voices, shows itself to be more layered and structured by different spaces – with their own kind of time (e.g. condensed into threshold moments or a cyclical time that leaves little mark on people) and characters that are rooted to this time-space. It is from these experiences that organisations take on layered qualities between chronotopes such that moving into and staying within a chronotope of being heard by desirable others in the Organisation involves managing the properties of this chronotope.

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End Notes

1 Transcription conventions are: '…' extract started or ended mid turn; '(…)' text omitted mid-turn; word underlined indicates particular stress on that word; dash at the end of a word means a cut-off and change of direction mid-turn.

2 Interviewee pseudonym followed in bracket with a short, relevant description.

3 'Morris dancing' is a form of public folk celebration associated in the UK with the Cotswolds and Northern England in which organised dancers, wearing traditional costumes with bells, perform as a group with movements which include tapping each other with small batons.

4 'Multiplatform' refers to the potential of new technologies such as smart phones and on-line channels to offer new forms of distribution.