[This chapter will appear in Revsbæk, L. and Simpson, B. (eds) (Forthcoming) Doing Process Research in Organizations: Noticing Differently. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Please support and cite the published version of the text.]

The Ethnographer as Conceptual Persona: On the Many Shopping Centres

Abstract

There is a long tradition of ethnographic work that is premised upon the reflexive acknowledgement that the ethnographer changes, grows, and develops as they learn about and experience the field, enabling them to form new connections, associations, and relations to the actors within it. Yet the figure of the ethnographer, imbued with coherency and author(ity), means that there is always an assumed fixity and stability to the field, as it is observed by a subject that is understood to be reflexively aware of its own becomings and yet still an unchanging entity that observes the fieldsite. In this chapter, we present an ethnographic account of a shopping centre as experienced by various 'conceptual personae'. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1994), we will develop an account of how conceptual personae make available different shopping centres, by allowing new connections and disconnections, conjunctions and disjunctions, associations and dissociations, giving rise to their own concepts and imminently produced ways of knowing. We will explore the shopping centres of the disembodied, the insomniac, and the paramnesiac, each of which offers different ways of noticing a shopping centre and the capitalist milieu of which it is a part.

Keywords

Deleuze and Guattari; shopping centre; ethnography; conceptual personae; concepts; capitalism

The Ethnographer as Conceptual Persona: On the Many Shopping Centres

Prologue

As you get off the bus, the warm spring breeze lightly inflected with the smell of diesel hits your face. You walk past ornate flower baskets and illuminated advertisements for forthcoming events and get on an escalator that takes you into a tunnel like area with faux-marble floors and a high arch ceiling. The doors at the end seem to beckon to you.

You enter the shopping centre. The bright April sun permeates through the glass ceiling. The ornamental palm trees provide little shade. Ostentatious gold-painted plaster work adorns the walls. Roses are embossed on the decorative moulding and are frosted into the glass of the polished banisters glinting in the sun. The attractive displays tempt your eyes, and you notice the array of pastel tops that are currently in fashion. The air is cool and full of a blooming buzz. You are enticed by the smell of popcorn. You pass through a gaggle of your fellow shoppers and catch snippets of conversation about football, The Voice being filmed nearby, Hannah's surgery, a neighbour's new extension, or a co-worker who retired early. The mall stretches out before you in a slow curving arc, a vertical horizon which at that moment seems infinite, endless both in time and space. The precipitation of all of the conversation, music snippets, whirring machines, and the percussion of feet on the chocolate-coloured tile, is a low rumbling in B-flat.

Yet at the same time as you notice all of this, you also cannot notice it. Like many actors who find themselves enmeshed in the plays of contemporary capitalism in its various enactments under the bright lights of the shopping centre, you live at speed. A dromomaniacal agent, capable only of rushing between events. You are in a hurry to pick up your dry-cleaning,

purchase a present for your mother, grab lunch at the food-court, renew the prescription on your glasses, or whatever errand brought you to the shopping centre today. Despite its rich cross-sectional tapestry, a living mosaic of interconnected sociality, the shopping centre is merely the background, part of the mise-en-scène of the drama of your life. It is both an exorbitant panoply of sensory stimulation that requires you to be affected in response, and a white noise which cannot be noticed as you hurry towards some goal of whose exact nature you will never be sure.

Conceptual Personae: The People of the Shopping Centre

To whom or what does the second person 'you' in the preceding account refer?

In their final co-authored work, philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1994, 8) ask us to consider the question, 'what is philosophy?'. Through extended rumination and exegesis, they conclude that philosophy is the 'continuous creation of concepts'. Throughout the text, they describe the role and properties of the concept. Concepts are tools for thought, apparatuses by which we might apprehend the world. In trying to allude to a concept's nature and different functions, they describe it as a 'heterogenesis', 'a refrain', 'an incorporeal', 'an absolute surface', 'inseparable variations', 'a condensation', 'a centre of vibration', and 'an array of joints and bridges'. These colourful descriptions prove to be of secondary importance to what truly makes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a concept a novel one. For them, a concept has a history, a series of problems to which it was connected and out of which it is developed as a response, but it also has a becoming, a trajectory that is formed out of its relation to different concepts, encounters, connectives, and disjunctures, within a milieu. Concepts are thus never fixed. They are always in process, always becoming, always productive, always 'doing' something, and each time that they occur, in life or in text, they

take on a new meaning, forging new associations, and developing themselves anew (Deleuze and Guattari 1994).

This manner of thinking about concepts has already been of much interest to organizational scholars (Styhre 2002; Linstead and Thanem 2007). The question that perhaps remains to be answered is one that considers what the conditions for the emergence of concepts are. Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 11) suggest that 'the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself – it is a self-positing. Creation and self-positing mutually imply each other.*'* The notion of 'creation' here is one that eclipses and effaces the subject or author who we would ordinarily assume to be involved in the creative act. Much like Barthes and Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the concept does not emerge because of an author, rather, the author is part of a milieu in which particular forms of conceptualization, and the articulation thereof, become possible. Smith (2012) explains this using the example of eponymous diseases, like Alzheimer's, which will have existed long before the scientist after which it is named was able to study and document it, isolating its qualities within the milieu and creating a concept with which to understand them. The proper name of the author is little more than a mask, an obfuscation mechanism, or placeholder that we use to gesture at the 'you' or 'I' who we typically assume is involved in the concept's creation. To suggest that a concept is capable of positing itself, that it has a 'virtual' life and exists as a potentiality which is only actualized through a particular medium, poses a profound challenge to our commonly held notions of agency, subjectivity, and our assumptions of the autonomy and insight of the researcher.

Yet, for Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 5), the concept also does not emerge independent of a creator, 'they must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator's signature'. The ontogenetic process of a concept's emergence requires a vector. A medium. Someone or something to or through which they become available. Thus,

while to say that a concept posits itself is to acknowledge that there is more to its emergence than just an author, it is also to acknowledge that for concepts to be created, to be brought into the world, they need a friend. For Deleuze and Guattari, this friend is the conceptual persona. The work of philosophy involves constantly bringing these conceptual personae to life because concepts need conceptual personae to play a part in their definition, description, and development.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 64) summarize this tension as follows:

> *'The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are the intercessors.'*

The conceptual persona helps to actualize the concept. They are able to help articulate and ambulate it as the vocalization of a collective assemblage of enunciation. These persona arrive 'from elsewhere as if they had gone through a catastrophe' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 5), a chaotic dispersal of the subject, or a realization of that 'harshest exercise in depersonalization' (Deleuze 1995, 6), via which one is able to open oneself up to the multiplicities of voice present within a milieu. Throughout What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari highlight examples of conceptual personae in the history of philosophy and develop their theorization of the function of these friends of the concept like Neitzsche's Zarathustra and Plato's Socrates, figures that emerge who are able to speak and engage in the work of producing concepts. Conceptual personae confront us with the mechanism or process of philosophy. The suggested role of the conceptual persona 'is to show thought's territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 69). They are how the philosopher is able to say 'I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places' (Deleuze

and Guattari 1994, 64) and in so doing acknowledge the plurality of personae which might inhabit or pass through them in the writing of a text. This critique of the coherency of the subject is a theme throughout Deleuze's work that extends well beyond his collaborations with Guattari (see Deleuze 1991). For example, in Difference and Repetition, he comments that:

> *Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our "self" only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says "me".* (Deleuze 2001, 75)

A conceptual persona is also always already plural, always an aggregation of multiple vocalizations, and always subject to production and reproduction by different readers and antagonists who multiply them. Each time a text is read, and a concept is drawn out of it, it is produced anew, and different versions of the conceptual persona emerge in order to facilitate this production. To acknowledge their presence in this way is to acknowledge the 'dramaturgy' of philosophy (Lambert 2019), and its continuous formation and interplay with different con-texts.

In a certain way, however, to think about the many conceptual personae who may dwell in a field and find their vocalization through the movements and writings of the ethnographer is nothing new. Indeed, as James Clifford (1986, 7) famously noted, ethnographic texts 'are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control', signalling the emergence of a new tradition of ethnographic work that is interested, not only in more reflexive and circumspect practices of writing of ethnographic work (see Cunliffe 2003), but also in exploring the new forms of theorization and conceptualization that might come from it (Da Col and Graeber 2011). Such work deviates

from the traditional Malinowskian image of the ethnographer as arbiter of truth and chronicler of reality. In this tradition, let us now try to imagine that ethnography is an exercise in practical philosophy. Many already do, and those associated with the ontological turn (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017; Viveiros de Castro 2014) or the move towards new empiricisms (Gane 2009; St Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei 2016) and post-qualitative research (St Pierre 2019; Gherardi 2019), perhaps already think of fieldwork as a potential site for the emergence of new concepts, new modes of conceptualizing experience, and of course, new conceptual personae, the 'people' who become of and through the field. Organizational ethnographers are increasingly aware that, if we hope to tell meaningful stories of the field, 'we need to avoid ready-made concepts and explanations which act to short-cut explanation' (O'Doherty and Neyland 2019, 461) and seek out modes of conceptualizing our experiences which are immanent to the mores, languages, and forms of sense of the field (see O'Doherty 2017). Our accounts need to highlight the ways in which fieldsites 'make sense' on their own terms. As such, let us ask an obscene question again.

You enter the shopping centre. Who or what is this 'you' and who or what names it as such? Is it merely an ethnographer? Could it be a conceptual persona which brings into being the very concept of the shopping centre? Could more than one such concept emerge? Would such conceptualizations of shopping centres have anything in common (e.g. their status as key sites of the performance of 'capitalism')? Are such commonalities related to the emergence of the 'you'? Whatever we might call this 'you' is surely becoming something other as it is affected by the shopping centre, it becomes a vehicle for someone or something else, another party in the shopping centre, which may want to speak. 'A particular conceptual persona, who perhaps did not exist before us, thinks in us' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 69). Concept and conceptual persona might in this case envelop each other, developing a trajectory out of their entangled histories, one which is mutually constitutive of something new, a 'you' and a

‘shopping centre’ emerge together. But how could we render ourselves available to this move of double articulation whereby the philosopher and conceptual persona envelop one another, mutually constituting each other in a process of double subjectivation, in order to make this a part of an account of the field? What madnesses would we have to cultivate within ourselves in order to better attend to the multiple realities of the field which are unique to our interlocutors without subsuming them all under the gaze of the ethnographer, or more accurately, how can we sufficiently dissociate ourselves from ourselves in order to render the coherency and author(ity) of the ethnographer as rational subject open to doubt.

Any gesture in this direction would involve a tracing of becomings (Deleuze and Guattari 2005), committing oneself to remaining open and available to the forms of sense that are germane to a field, and becoming a transversal point for the emergence of the concepts and ways of knowing that these might generate. It would involve moving beyond reflexivity and its accordant attention to the embodied and affectual relations in the field, and into the uncharted territory of the self-perceptive spiral, trying to see oneself as seeing and seen by a shopping centre that is also becoming as it sees and is seen. It would involve divorcing ourselves from ‘the rational’ and indulging panpsychist considerations, asking what the shopping centre might desire, and whether such desiring might be intelligible or describable within language. It would involve seeing the thick-description of the Prologue, not as an account of the shopping centre, but as the account of a shopping centre, one which became available by remembering the space and becoming imbricated within the different ‘conceptual entanglements’ (Mohammed 2019) that such memory work makes possible, and consequently one witnesses the blurring of the lines between subject and object, ethnographer and field, reality and fiction (cf Watson 2011). Once we can say that many shopping centres are possible and that they come about because of different conceptual personae involved in the producing of new concepts, we can begin to let go of the habit of our proper names, of the

belief in the ethnographer as subject, and try to sense the space, times, and sensory discord of the shopping centre. Staying with these becomings, we might notice that something else begins to speak.

The Disembodied

You enter the shopping centre. The warm yellow of the fluorescent lights glistens off the sign that directs you to the anchor store at the other end of the mall, as well as other sites and locations within the shopping centre like a prayer room or a food court dubbed 'The Orient'. The signs that you see mark the shopping centre out as an example of what Augé (1992) calls a non-place, serving prescriptive and descriptive functions that tell you about the space and how to comport yourself within it.

The rancorous cacophony of sights, sounds, and smells waylays you with bombast and aggressive insistence. Everything demands to be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, sensed, moved, interacted with, and at the same time, there is an ineffable sense of pervasive control that seems to remind you that the many sensoria of the shopping centre exist for someone other than you, that you are not 'meant to' notice any of it. Scents of perfume, fast food, and the curious quality of filtered air passing through an air-conditioner playfully flirt with your nostrils but never overwhelm or do more than entice you; the measured, calculated, and ventilated blandness of an 'urban smellscape' (Henshaw 2013) that seeks to avoid offence. The songs that you hear being played are part of a meticulously curated list of muzak that aims to do little more than colour the retail atmosphere, gently floating along the malls (Anderson 2015; DeNora 2004). Such an aesthetic might recall some 'hyperreal' (Baudrillard 1994) image of an American shopping mall in the 1980's, one that could be said to have that unique aesthetic that has come to be synonymous with Vaporwave's derivative, 'mallsoft'. It

occurs to you that a shopping centre is a hypercontrolled and mediated nexus of a highly plural concordance of disciplinary regimes. Yet at the same time the spaces of shopping centres are involved in prolonged flirtations with boundary extension and obfuscation, paradox and pastiche. In their mimicry of its affects they capitalize upon a nostalgia for the old town square and present themselves as public spaces, yet they are privately owned (Goss 1993). Shopping centres seem to be open to all members of the public and yet their design often seeks to invite the patronage of a particular middle-class community, while outliers, like the homeless, are overtly policed out (Thanem 2012). Your body begins to tremble with the weight of the push and pull of various paradoxical practices, or maybe this is simply a migraine brought on by the sheer plurality of sights, smells and sounds. You sit on a bench and dissociate under the benign blanket of the dull murmurs of conversation and regular-ness that make up the shopping centre's atmospherics.

You begin to feel a perverse and growing sense of paranoia, one that is enveloped by a certain systematic uncertainty around the question of where 'you' end and where the shopping centre begins. So much of the sound of the crowd, the neutral and inoffensive smells of the air, and its fast food are now within your body—the shopping centre gave you the clothes that you wear and the glasses with which you see—how could you say that it is not a part of you? Your vision blurs and the outline of people, tables, displays, statues, and the many shapes of the malls grow fuzzy and become difficult to discern. 'A body is defined only by a longitude and a latitude' (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 260)—by the lines of material, affect, and velocity, that crisscross and intersect on a plane.

A concept emerges: A line. 'Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines' (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 124). Lines constitute words, allow the notation of music, map airflow, create boundaries, and designate trajectories of people and things that move through the shopping centre. You begin to obsess over lines and their lives. 'To lead a life is to lay

down a line' (Ingold 2015, 118). A line may constitute a vector of escape, a line of flight, from a particular state of affairs as well as the gesture which cuts off such escapes (Deleuze and Guattari 2005). The interweaving, intersection, and knotting of lines is what defines and demarcates bodies. It is lines that separate and distinguish them, lines that constitute bodies as discrete entities. Lines seem to you to be the boundaries that define an organization. The skin is such a line, but much like the walls of the shopping centre it is porous, undulating, folding, and ultimately permeable. That is to say, lines have a solidity that can only be maintained in the moment of their construction. Your body's lines blur upon examination. You notice a line of people formed outside the Apple store. It will not open for another fifteen minutes, but they have formed an orderly queue using the lines on the tile as a guide system. The lines of the tile seem to you to form an infinite grid or chessboard on which many moves of great or little importance are made, intercut occasionally by a stain or a shadow from an overarching dust-covered palm tree. The lines of the security grating form staves that flow into each other onto which your mind plots the music that the shopping centre is playing for you. Gold undulating lines are embossed upon the concrete to accentuate the distinction between the first and second floors. A line of dialogue comes over the tannoy and interrupts your thoughts: 'If you lose members of your party please meet at the customer services desk in the main dome. Thank you.'

The Insomniac

You enter the shopping centre. A dull ache in the temples and a foggy sense of confused uncertainty forms an indefinite malaise or torpor that is less akin to lethargy and more akin to vertigo. You have not slept in several days and have been struggling intermittently with insomnia for some time before that. You feel unmoored, like a ship floating in the storm, or a

customer wandering through the shopping centre unsure of why they are there and where they might want to go. Over time you adjust to the fatigue and the haze. It becomes naturalized, something that you learn to live with, even as you begin to suspect that it is the shopping centre which does not want you to sleep. What few moments of sleep you manage to have are filled with dreams of walking the malls, parading in a loop that never ends. So, you begin to count. It is never clear to you why. You can only say that you are gripped by the paralyzing fear that you might be losing time. Because it disrupts the body's internal rhythms, insomnia makes the passage of time feel different and since the shopping centre has no visible clocks you are never sure what time it is. The shopping centre obsesses over your time and wants you to ignore it. It wants to think about wage hours, delivery slots, and deadlines, while you are taken in to a flight of fantasy wherein you lose track of yourself and indulge hedonistic plays. It wants to induce the 'Gruen effect' or the 'dreamlike state in which consumers lose track of time and place' (Csaba and Askegaard 1999, 34). Over time you begin to obsess over patterns and routines. What time the middle-aged Asian cleaner passes in front of Selfridges with their cart. What time of day the crowds in the food court become most dense. What time the lights turn on as the sun sets. What time throngs of people exit the movie theatre. You start to see and hear patterns constantly. A metronomic click. 4/4 at 60 beats per minute. Insomnia has made of you a time machine. You elaborate this into cycles of four, 15 bars per minute, 900 per hour, and thus the simple clicking of a metronome becomes a structure, a crutch for your insomnia-addled mind to keep track of time.

In a haze, you notice a group of dancers who have congregated on the shopping centre's food-court. The usual assortment of wooden chairs and tables have been moved to the side and the area has been roped off to give the dancers room to manoeuvre. A band is playing a song and the water feature at the centre of the food-court seems to reverberate with their sound. You do not recognize the piece, but you can make out the rhythm, 3/4, a waltz. At

least it sounds that way to you, echoing off the high ceiling and intermingling with the sounds of the arcade, the clatter of cutlery, people moving around, children laughing, and general conversation. You become enthralled by the movement of the dancers and their feet cresting across the brown tile of the floor.

A concept emerges: A rubato waltz. A rhythm that varies outside, in-between, and through the different times and temporalities that might be true in a shopping centre. There seems to you to be an aesthetic to the experience of time in the shopping centre. One that can scarcely be believed, because many of us are still wedded to images of time that rely on the maintenance of binary oppositions like between our lived experience of time and clock time (Legge 2009), or because we often prefer to think of time via metaphors (Hassard 2001), or in terms of 'classified variants and unlocated theorization' (Holt and Johnsen 2019, 1569), but the aesthetics of time are often bluntly intuited. Alan Lightman (1993) managed to find a language to speak about it when writing Einstein's Dreams, exploring the ways in which time might come to feel and move differently in different spaces. Time might be sticky, and it might move slower in some places than others. In some worlds, time might be accelerated and a person's entire life might be truncated into a day and in other worlds, time exists as an abstract quality, like a kind of luminescence. 'Time is not an a priori form; rather, the refrain is the a priori form of time, which in each case fabricates different times' (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 349), new times are always being created, the question is simply whether you are able to sense and understand them.

A shopping centre of time presents itself to you as an agglomeration of sensation so absurd in its manifold complexity that you could never call it anything but a waltz. The aesthetics of time in the shopping centre is the Dvorak that you can swear you hear in the air. The waltz of the shopping centre dances on in the sound of footsteps clicking on the faux-marble floors. 1, 2, 3. 1, 2, 3. The simple 4/4 of the pop/dance music emanating from the stores melding into a

curious crescendo that merges with the buzzing of a thousand voices. It takes the fountain made of six stone dolphins a minute and a half to cycle through its pre-programmed rotation, culminating in three perfunctory bursts that stretch into the ornate dome above. Something like ‘organization’ is momentarily adumbrated in the fraction of an instant between when the water shoots into the air and when it comes crashing back into the basin below (O’Doherty 2017). A lightning flash that perhaps reflects off the coins that many people throw as they make wishes, which the shopping centre collects and donates to charities, lets you finally see the connections between a global banking sector still recovering from crisis, the precarity and instability of the mores of contemporary work, and a shopping centre at the epicentre of it all. A ‘timeful simultaneity of interpenetrating pasts and futures’ (Simpson, Tracey, and Weston 2020, 83). Or at least you think you see it, you have not had a good night’s sleep in a long time, and can no longer be sure of what you are seeing anymore.

The Paramnesiac

You enter the shopping centre. You are fairly certain that you are in a dream but wonder vaguely whose dream you are in, followed immediately by a questioning of whether people who are dreaming wonder about that kind of thing. There is a blurry quality to those things that you notice, as though they are far away, or occurring in some far-removed time and place. The people in the crowd seem to move dragging tails of light behind them, as though you were looking at them through astigmatic eyes at night. The rain pours onto the glass ceiling. A man carrying a newly purchased stereo on his shoulder walks by. Everything insists upon being remembered and yet it also seems to be impossible to hold on to.

A boy waving a plastic sword and wearing a dinosaur backpack runs past you. You will see him many times after this moment with your sleeping and waking eyes and indeed, you are

not sure that this is the first time that you have seen him race by. He is a blur. He reaches into the fountain to try to retrieve coins with a face full of laughter. The feeling of déjà vu is overpowering. You feel lost in a memory, one that you are not sure is yours, one which may belong to a different past, a dream that the shopping centre has animated. Indeed, shopping centres have always been designed as a 'stimulus to intoxication and dream' (Benjamin 1999, 216). The indiscriminate juxtaposition of signs (Baudrillard 1998) that seems to you to characterize shopping centres makes it difficult to tell what is 'real', and what is corresponding to that peculiar dream logic where things flow together without clear rationale or reasoning, blurring into an undulating parade of remembering that becomes difficult for you to disentangle in your mind; a new form of paramnesia. For Henri Bergson, déjà vu or false recognition, is a memory of the present. He speaks about it as a kind of 'depersonalization', what occurs when you slip into the indulgence of that singular feeling of déjà vu, and become a stranger to yourself, a spectator of your own life, certain that you are remembering the present and are able to predict the future because you have lived it before, perhaps in another past-present-future. You feel like this as you see fragments of images in rapid succession: a straw passing between pursed lips, a glint of light from an empty store, a cleaning cart, a discarded receipt, a cigarette butt, a flower in the wind, a 'Caution: Wet Floor' sign—each one seems to be in your memory for the first time, while also being present to you a multitude of times before and after that.

You lock eyes with a ceramic elephant that has appeared on the malls. You are sure that you remember seeing it before, but the nuanced undulation of lines that pattern its surfaces is so unique that you are certain that you would have remembered seeing it before. You hear the quiet movement and unmistakable music of the carousel. It seems to have sprung up overnight surrounded by flyers and heraldry. There will no doubt be moments when, to you, its motion will have been revolutionary. Indeed, there will be moments when to you it

seemed to be an ‘I’, a thing such as yourself which is bound in a simple, linear track of prehension, revolving in a world that was standing still, one whose experience, much like yours, was incommunicable within the bounds of language. Yet perhaps it was always there. Even in the moments before the land had been purchased from a shipping company, before the ground was flattened, compacted, and tiled, perhaps the carousel was in its place and standing still. All of the tumultuous and multitudinous changes made within the shopping centre, seem to you to be a torrent, one that has occurred while the carousel has been standing still. Moving in place, moving in another time, a revolving spectacle, a rotating amusement, a new metaphor for organization itself (see Morgan 1997).

A concept emerges: a palimpsest. A memory device comprised of a thin film and a wax surface onto which anything can be written. For Freud (1961), it was the model of the unconscious mind, things written but buried from view, because if the film is lifted off of the wax everything seems to be forgotten but beneath, traces of what was written remain. You become obsessed with looking for these traces, fragments of a remembering, that might ground you to a shopping centre that is more real than the dream that you sometimes wonder if you are stuck in. A sign on a bench commemorating the life of a long dead worker. A crack in the tile. An area where the paint is better preserved than the wall around it because something was in the way. A tradition that no one can remember the origin of. An aesthetic which itself seems to call back to some impossible to remember nostalgia for a Greco-Roman grandiosity; which is to say that the bodily experience of a shopping centre is best compared to a feeling of nostalgia for a place and time that never will have been, a hauntology (Fisher 2014). You see the spaces of the shopping centre as a palimpsest. You watch as it is written-over by the seasons. Christmas fares and decorations give way to spring fashions which are replaced by beach themes and a sand pit for children which only ever portends the crunch of the leaves underfoot in the autumn. Each time what was is erased and returned to a blank

surface with the traces of what once was remaining in subtle lines of mould and spaces on the floor that are more worn by foot traffic. Yet even as things are prodigiously cleaned and restored each day, there is always a remembering. However, lost between a dream and the real, you are not sure precisely who is remembering and why. Yet all the while you are aware that these traces and rememberings are not what lingers from what was forgotten, but rather, what disguises that past and present, virtual and actual (Deleuze 1997), are contemporaneous and ultimately indistinguishable.

On Noticing

In his essential book, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson (1991) comments on an encounter with The Westin Bonaventure Hotel. He catalogues that in its organization, the space is constructed in a way that one may easily become lost and unable to locate oneself, passing seamlessly from retail space to hotel to open plan eating with little sign or direction. In a certain reading, Jameson saw the space itself as inhospitable, affecting a psychic malaise on those who walked through it by breeding confusion and disorientation. Jameson would conclude that 'we are here in the presence of something like a mutation in built space itself. [...] We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace' (Jameson 1991, 38) or indeed, the cultural logic of capitalism which produces such a space.

Similarly, studying a shopping centre in a serious way is an experience that conjures madnesses of many kinds. The space is so plural, paradoxical, blustering, elegant, gaudy, garish, subtle, refined, sacred, and profane, as to be unknowable. We do not yet possess the intellectual and perceptual tools that would be necessary in order for us to study it effectively. One can only speculate that this has nothing to do with the shopping centre's design and

purpose at all, but rather it is simply where the schizophrenic processes of capitalism, which Deleuze and Guattari (2000) describe, present themselves most saliently to be apprehended by human sensoria. If capitalism is the 'terrifying nightmare' that they depict, haunting all previous forms of social formation because it liberates flows of desire, then of course it is impossible for us to understand or fully apprehend it as it appears to us in the shopping centre. Something will always escape and go by unnoticed; these hyperspaces are simply too much to conceptualize.

But there is more at stake than this. Any serious analysis of the shopping centre must necessarily become an analysis of the psychic affects that it produces. Hedonistic flights, dissociation, melancholia, anxiety, paranoia, insomnia, paramnesia, ambiguous nostalgia, and a disaffected torpor that by its very nature is difficult to accurately describe, cannot be understood as individual pathologies but rather, in the tradition of the anti-psychiatry movement, must be understood as the responses of a collective unconscious to the space itself, and perhaps by extension, to the mores of capitalism which it both reflects and reproduces (Fisher 2009). More recent analyses of the affects of capitalism highlight the acute feeling of helplessness that it engenders, juxtaposed against the boundless optimism and promise of freedom that it has always offered, and suggest simply that 'it might be best to abandon the concept entirely' (Latour 2014). In this regard, we ask whether such broad and general concepts as 'capitalism', which take on an almost transcendental quality, can be relevant to us in understanding something like a shopping centre. On the one hand, a turn towards immanent analyses that highlight the production of concepts within a field is cause for celebration among organizational ethnographers who are increasingly involved in this kind of work (see O'Doherty and Neyland 2019), and yet on the other hand in order to do this kind of work in the shopping centre, we must continuously labour to not notice the schizophrenizing processes of capitalism, endlessly deterritorializing, endlessly axiomatizing,

and always taking place in every transaction, every interaction, and every process which informs the shopping centre's everyday lives. This tension is difficult to resolve because 'the ethnographer' can be conceived in the same manner.

The acute ecstasies and disaffection of life in the shopping centre produces conceptual personae, its spaces becoming home to these other people, the concept's friends, who enable new forms of thought and thinking to emerge. Whether these are capitalized subjects or not is irrelevant, as the double-tension remains the same. A 'you' inhabiting the space will, over the course of a year, become cognizant of the existence of many others and their becomings. At the same time, these must be denied as the ethnographer is called upon to represent themselves as a coherent, self-aware, and reflexive subject. Indeed, increasingly there are calls for ethnography to produce replicable or generalizable findings (see Lubet 2018) as though this were ever possible without an elaborate performance that denies the plurality and multiplicity of others who will always have spoken to and through the ethnographer. In acknowledging that ethnography could only continue to meaningfully develop in a post-positivistic, post-qualitative academy, we would have to reckon with the heterotopias which the rational figure of 'the ethnographer' obfuscates and recognize that the ethnographer is being constituted by us as readers in the parsing of an ethnographic text. We would also have to reflect collectively on what powers and potencies we imbue this literary figure who wanders the shopping centre, the airport, the offices of Wall Street, the operating theatres of doctors at war, and so on, and thus come to terms with what voices and forms of sense we are excluding as this persona performs. Indeed, the ethnographer was always a conceptual persona. One who learns, who studies, who makes fieldnotes, who tries to be reflexive, who tries to adhere to the standards of research ethics, who writes up findings to report to the academy with an awareness of the colonial histories of their tradition, and so on. Such a persona is always only involved in the production of certain kinds of fields. In this way it is

an intellectual distancing device, an intentional blindness, a turning away, used to fend off the sensorial excesses of the shopping centre. What other conceptual personae become unavailable because of the ethnographer and its fabulation? What other shopping centres might exist without the ethnographer or if one were able to do ethnography in a way which acknowledged the production of conceptual personae and their mutual envelopment in and by the field?

It only makes sense to us to say that paranoia and dissociation, insomnia, and déjà vu and paramnesia, were produced by the shopping centre in the ethnographer. In this way, the ethnographic subject became undone and unmade by the shopping centre and as someone or something else began to speak of its collective dreamings, new personae emerged. They were affected by their experiences and enjoined to become other by the tumults and vicissitudes of the spaces and times of the shopping centre, a process that involves a fracturing out, a splintering, a proliferation of subjects qua conceptual personae, each one with its own way of noticing. Each one producing new concepts by which it can make sense of the shopping centre. Consequently, each one produces a new shopping centre. A shopping centre of lines and their intersection. A shopping centre of abstract rhythms and a unique temporal aesthetic. A shopping centre that flirts with the boundaries between dream and reality, prompting memories of the present. Each one of these shopping centres is unique. They become differentially available. No return to one of these shopping centres would ever have been possible because the conceptualized ‘you’ qua ethnographer and the concept of the shopping centre that it produced will always have been becoming other through their mutual envelopment. Again, there is a double-move here that this chapter has sought to illustrate: the ‘you’ becomes a vehicle for the actualization of different personae which are at work in the field and is thus a part of the novel production of concepts. At the same time, the different shopping centres which become available through these concepts produce different

conceptual personae in order to apprehend them. It is by this ouroboric set of relations that the concept is able to posit itself, that the shopping centre is empowered to auto-conceptualization and we might be able to sketch an answer to a question at the limits of our current analytical capacities: 'How does a shopping centre think and what are the concepts it uses in order to do so?' We should always be seeking the limits of thought, for it is there that we might be able to say something new or meaningful about the organizations that we seek to study; a shopping centre pushes us always towards such a limit, where other shopping centres become available to be thought and 'organization' itself becomes possible to conceptualize in the tracing of boundaries (see Burrell and Parker 2016).

How do we begin to notice all of these shopping centres and open up to the conceptual personae that help us to conceptualize them? Increasingly, voices across the academy are arguing that our methods need to actually reflect the theorists upon whom we seek to draw (St Pierre 2021; Jackson and Mazzei 2012), but here we can offer no methodological prescriptions. Following Deleuze and Guattari (2005), we maintained a commitment towards experimentation, but there was no technique, no principles, and no rules that governed this. Instead, we simply tried to remain open to the shopping centre's dynamics, to what conceptual personae were living there and experimented with different concepts that seem to us to be resonant or useful to understand what we felt that they wanted to say. Doing this, inviting a kind of possession, was a risk, one that might just as well have taken us to a point where we can say confidently that 'we are no longer ourselves […] we have been aided, inspired, multiplied' (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 3), as it might have plunged us into a black hole of madness and instability. Yet it felt at times as if madness was what the paradoxicality of the shopping centre demanded, what it desired, almost as though it wanted to realize the dreams of 'a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event' and all of those things other than the human which might be individuated (Deleuze 1995, 26) and so try to

speak. In this context, to hold on to the image of a singular ethnographer is thus to deny the experiences and associations of the field, writing over our anxieties about our own authority and academic responsibility, and consequently denying the different shopping centres that became available.

The disembodied, the insomniac, and the paramnesiac are all bound to the shopping centres that they produce and are produced by. Their existence and ways of noticing are wholly immanent to the shopping centre and cannot be transferred or applied elsewhere. Where ordinarily we would assume that 'the ethnographer' moves transcendentally between the spaces and times of the shopping centre, carrying with them their subjectivities and ways of knowing, here we can see them being replaced by these conceptual personae. It is in the treacherous slippages between immanence and transcendence that shopping centres emerge, replete with distant murmurs of conversation, children crying, miscellany being dropped, crumpling paper bags, phones ringing, and the tell-tale squeak of the soles of rubber shoes on the tile. Yet these are all images that are a part of a shopping centre, one that is involved in the becoming of a particular conceptual persona and the emergence of particular concepts. What other personae and what other concepts might emerge in other times and other places, finding their voices through other vectors? Much more importantly, what other shopping centres might there be? It is perhaps only the transmutation of the ethnographer into some other persona, which we have tried to trace in this paper, that can lead to their conceptualization. Whatever the answer, you must enter a shopping centre in order to find out.

References

Anderson, Paul Allen. (2015). Neo-Muzak and the Business of Mood. Critical Inquiry 41 (4): 811–840. https://doi.org/10.1086/681787.

Augé, Marc. (1992). Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. London: Verso.

Baudrillard, Jean. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. (1998). The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures. London: SAGE Publications.

Benjamin, Walter. (1999). The Arcades Project. London: Harvard University Press.

Burrell, Gibson, and Martin Parker, eds. (2016). For Robert Cooper. Abingdon: Routledge.

Clifford, James. (1986). Introduction: Partial Truths. In James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, 1–26. London: University of California Press.

Csaba, Fabian, and Søren Askegaard. (1999). Malls and the Orchestration of the Shopping Experience in a Historical Perspective. Advances in Consumer Research 26 (1): 34–40.

Cunliffe, Ann L. (2003). Reflexive Inquiry in Organizational Research: Questions and Possibilities. Human Relations56 (8): 983–1003. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267030568004.

Da Col, Giovanni, and David Graeber. (2011). Foreword: The Return of Ethnographic Theory. HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory1 (1): vi–xxxv. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau1.1.001.

Deleuze, Gilles. (1991). A Philosophical Concept... In Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (eds), Who Comes After The Subject?, 94–95. London: Routledge.

Deleuze, Gilles. (1995). Negotiations. New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. (1997). Cinema II: The Time-Image. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. (2001). Difference and Repetition. London: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. (1994). What Is Philosophy? London: Verso.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. (2000). Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. (2005). A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. London: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. (2007). Dialogues II. New York: Columbia University Press.

DeNora, Tia. (2004). Music in Everyday Life. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fisher, Mark. (2009). Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? Alresford: Zero Books.

Fisher, Mark. (2014). Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures. Alresford: Zero Books.

Freud, Sigmund. (1961). A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'. In The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 227–232. London: The Hogarth Press.

Gane, Nicholas. (2009). Concepts and the 'New' Empiricism. European Journal of Social Theory 12 (1): 83–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431008099645.

Gherardi, Silvia. (2019). Theorizing Affective Ethnography for Organization Studies. Organization 26 (6): 741–760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418805285.

Goss, Jon. (1993). The 'Magic of the Mall': An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment. Annals of The Association of American Geographers 83 (1): 18–47. https://doi.org/10.2307/2569414.

Hassard, John. (2001). Commodification, Construction and Compression: A Review of Time Metaphors in Organizational Analysis. International Journal of Management Reviews 3 (2): 131. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2370.00059.

Henshaw, Victoria. (2013). Urban Smellscapes: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203072776.

Holbraad, Martin, and Morten Axel Pedersen. (2017). The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holt, Robin, and Rasmus Johnsen. (2019). Time and Organization Studies. Organization Studies 40 (10): 1557–1572. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619844292.

Ingold, Tim. (2015). The Life of Lines. London and New York: Routledge.

Jackson, Alecia Y., and Lisa Mazzei. (2012). Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research: Viewing Data across Multiple Perspectives. Oxon: Routledge.

Jameson, Fredric. (1991). Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. London: Verso.

Lambert, Gregg. (2019). Who Are Deleuze's Conceptual Personae? In Dorothea Olkowski and Eftichis Pirovolakis (eds), Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of Freedom: Freedom's Refrains, 68–78. London: Routledge.

Latour, Bruno. (2014). On Some of the Affects of Capitalism. Royal Academy, Copenhagen, 1–13.

Legge, Karen. (2009). Time. In Philip Hancock and Andre Spicer (eds), Understanding Corporate Life, 79–95. London: Sage.

Lightman, Alan. (1993). Einstein's Dreams. London: Corsair.

Linstead, Stephen, and Torkild Thanem. (2007). Multiplicity, Virtuality and Organization: The Contribution of Gilles Deleuze. Organization Studies 28 (10): 1483–1501. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840607075675.

Lubet, Steven. (2018). Interrogating Ethnography: Why Evidence Matters. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mohammed, Sideeq. (2019). Unthinking Images of Time in Organizations: 'The Shopping Centre Keeps Time with a Rubato Waltz'. Organization 26 (2): 199–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418808241.

Morgan, Gareth. (1997). Images of Organization. London: Sage.

O'Doherty, Damian. (2017). Reconstructing Organization: The Loungification of Society. London: Palgrave.

O'Doherty, Damian, and Daniel Neyland. (2019). The Developments in Ethnographic Studies of Organising: Towards Objects of Ignorance and Objects of Concern. Organization. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419836965.

Pierre, Elizabeth Adams St. (2019). Post Qualitative Inquiry in an Ontology of Immanence. Qualitative Inquiry 25 (1): 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418772634.

Pierre, Elizabeth Adams St. (2021). Post Qualitative Inquiry, the Refusal of Method, and the Risk of the New. Qualitative Inquiry 27 (1): 3–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419863005.

Pierre, Elizabeth Adams St, Alecia Y. Jackson, and Lisa A. Mazzei. (2016). New Empiricisms and New Materialisms: Conditions for New Inquiry. Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies 16 (2): 99–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616638694.

Simpson, Barbara, Rory Tracey, and Alia Weston. (2020). The Timefulness of Creativity in an Accelerating World. In Juliane Reinecke, Roy Suddaby, Ann Langley, and Haridimos Tsoukas (eds), Time, Temporality, and History in Process Organization Studies, 69–88. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Daniel W. (2012). Essays on Deleuze. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Styhre, Alexander. (2002). Thinking with AND: Management Concepts and Multiplicities. Organization9 (3): 459–475. https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840293012.

Thanem, Torkild. (2012). All Talk and No Movement? Homeless Coping and Resistance to Urban Planning. Organization 19: 441–460. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508411414228.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. (2014). Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology. Minneapolis: Univocal.

Watson, Tony J. (2011). Ethnography, Reality, and Truth: The Vital Need for Studies of ‘How Things Work’ in Organizations and Management. Journal of Management Studies 48 (1): 202–217. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00979.x.

Author Bio

Sideeq Mohammed is a Lecturer in Organizational Behaviour/HRM at the University of Kent. Sideeq's work is interested in engaging with philosophy in order to critically reflect on the problems posed by and to "organization" in the contemporary milieu. He has a particular fondness for the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and has published work that draws heavily on their mode of experimenting with "concepts" in order to think about organization in more robust ways including the monograph: "Stories and Organization in the Anthropocene: A Critical Look at the Impossibility of Sustainability" published by Palgrave Macmillan. Sideeq lives in Canterbury, UK. ORCID iD: 0000-0003-2046-5465.