<center>**Chapter 8**</center>

Immersion at Work: Affect and Power in Post-Fordist Work Cultures

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Abstract

We explore some of the ways in which relational affect has been turned into a subtle device for governing individuals. We focus on present-day workplace arrangements in network corporatism or, more generally, post-Fordism. Our purpose is also a theoretical one, namely that of consolidating a philosophical conception of relational affect in the tradition of Spinoza and Deleuze, with emphasis on the nexus of affect and power. The chapter starts with a section on conceptual foundations, first outlining the gist of a Spinozist understanding of affecting and being affected and, second, sketching the working concept of an "affective arrangement" as a bridge between the theoretical framework and a concrete analytical perspective. In the second part of the chapter, we will then present two case studies of "immersive" affective arrangements in contemporary white-collar workplaces, drawing on research literature in workplace ethnography, sociology and cultural studies.

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore some of the ways in which relational affect has been turned into a subtle device for governing individuals, often such that it is not easily discernible *how* and even *that* power is exerted over them. We will focus on present-day workplace arrangements in what has been called network corporatism or, more generally, post-Fordism. Yet, our purpose is also an expressly theoretical one, namely that of consolidating a philosophical conception of relational affect in the tradition of Spinoza and Deleuze, with particular emphasis on the nexus of affect and power. Therefore, our chapter starts with a section on conceptual foundations. Here, we proceed in two stages. First, we condense the gist of a Spinozist understanding of affect in relatively general terms. Then we sketch the working concept of an "affective arrangement" – a descendant of both the Deleuzian "agencement machinique" and the Foucauldian "dispositif of power" – as a bridge between the more abstract conceptual framework and a concrete analytical perspective. Equipped with this concept, we will then present two case studies of "immersive" affective arrangements in contemporary white-collar workplaces, drawing on research literature in workplace ethnography, sociology and cultural studies. Our first case concerns teamwork and the seamless blending of networked office work and private life in precarious part-time employment. The second case study deals with what is tellingly called "Life at Google". We conclude with remarks on the prospects of an immanent critique of contemporary formations of affective subjectivation.

Theoretical framework: Researching affective relationality

The notion of affect

The first aim of our approach is to develop a category of affect that is suitable for an analysis of power and subjectivation. For this purpose, the notion of affect in the philosophical tradition from Baruch Spinoza to Gilles Deleuze is particularly useful. In this paper we remain neutral on the issue of whether one should endorse this view as a metaphysical perspective. What interests us is its potency as a set of working concepts that can illuminate the complex of affect, power, and subjectivity in real-world settings. Referring to Spinoza's main work, *Ethica*,[1] and to the interpretations given by Gilles Deleuze (1988; 1990), one can say that in this perspective, affect is mainly characterized by the following three points:

(1) *Relational ontology.* First, affect is a dynamic of effectuation in relations, that is, between individuals. Unlike in the mentalistic traditions of philosophy, affect in the Spinoza-Deleuze descent does not refer to inner feeling states. Actually, both parts are wrong in the expression "inner feeling states": Affects are no states as they are not *static*, but dynamic processes; neither are they inner or internal to an individual as they unfold as relations. These characterizations are in fact deeply rooted in Spinoza's ontological and metaphysical setup of a "substance monism" which cannot be reconstructed here.[2] Yet one of its important takeaways is that affect itself is an *ontological principle*: Being, for Spinoza, is being in relations of affection. That is, an individual itself is nothing more or less than *how it manifests in relations of affecting and being affected*. This ontology puts relations of affecting and being affected first and individuation (which is a process) second; it thus presents a radically relational and dynamic, and in this sense non-individualistic and non-substantial understanding of individuals and affects.

Another important takeaway of Spinoza's ontological setup is the theorem commonly referred to as ontological "parallelism" in opposition to Cartesian dualism:[3] Affects in Spinoza are inseparably both a mental and a bodily dynamic. More precisely, Spinoza states that "the mind and the body are one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension" (III, prop. 2 schol.).[4] This implies that the "body cannot determine the mind to thinking, and the mind cannot determine the body to motion, to rest, or to anything else". Rather, "motion and rest of the body must [always] arise from another body", that is, within a field of bodily relatedness (III, prop. 2 and dem.). Body and mind – or more technically, *extensio* and *cogitatio*, – are in Spinoza's terminology just two *attributes* under which the "order" and "connection of things" as part of the *one* substance may be explicated, and "hence the order of actions and passions of our body is,

by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the mind" (III, prop. 2 schol.). This parallelism theorem – however technical and abstract it might come across if stated this plainly –, is an important background axiom to our approach to social micro-dynamics. It gives the reason why the nexus of affective dynamics and concurrent subjectivity must be analyzed in social situations and networks of relations where affect is a register of reciprocity on a bodily *and* a mental level. This is our proposed alternative to framing the phenomenon of affect and concurrent subjectivity as a psychological problem on the interface of outer dynamics vs. inner subjectivity for each single individual.

(2) *Affecting and being affected.* The second characteristic of Spinoza's notion of affect is that affect is always an interplay of *affecting and being affected.* Hence an affection is not a one-sided or unilateral impact of one individual on another. Rather, active and receptive involvement are inseparable from one another. As a consequence of this, the unfolding of an affective dynamic is never reducible to properties of only *one* of the involved individuals. The way one individual is affecting and being affected in a certain situation co-depends on all the other participating individuals.[5] In this conceptual framework, the question is less, *who* is affecting *whom*; rather, the question is *how* a dynamic of affecting and being affected evolves in the immanence of a situation, of a given relational setting.

This interpretation is again rooted in the shift from individualistic to relational and processual ontology. In particular, taking affect as an *irreducible* entanglement of affecting and being affected does not simply boil down to an understanding where a cascade of "one-directional affections" of individual A on B with subsequent "counter affections" of B on A is summing up to reciprocity on an aggregate level. The interplay of affecting and being affected must be taken in a *strong* sense, even to the point of affecting the implied understanding of causality itself: The prototypically modern idea of *causality as transitive* (with billiard balls as standard model) is to be shifted into a thinking of *immanent causalit*y[6] between things as parts of a higher context of effectuation, of which the physics of *coupled oscillatitors* would be the illustrating textbook model. Thus the elementary structure of our notion of affect is not that of an *impact-on,* that is, of a directed, asymmetric force across the boundaries of pre-constituted individuals transferring momentum from A to B at a discrete point in space and time. Rather, it is the structure of a *joined movement-with*, that is, of a *durational* coupling of the individuals' own movements in reciprocal *modulations* and *resonances*, so that in general it is impossible to say A is affecting B but not B is affecting A.[7] In a Deleuzian terminology, this is to say that affecting and being affected is always forming an open *process,* a process of *becoming* (cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1987, ch. 10).

(3) *Power*. Most crucially for the purpose of this paper, the notion of affect in Spinoza is intimately connected with a concept of power. Spinoza attributes to each individual a so-called *potentia,* which is

a kind of "micro power". This *potentia* is not something that individuals possess *besides* their other characteristics. *Potentia* might best be translated as the individual's *capacity* to enter into relations of affecting and being affected – or *affective capacity* in short.[8] Now, Spinoza says that this affective capacity is on the one hand the individual's ability of *being* in general (in the sense of an entity's ontic constitution): "Posse existere potentia est" ("to be able to exist is to have power", *Ethics* I, prop. 11 dem.); but at the same time, the individual's affective capacity is crucially also a *receptive* capacity as affect is always both active and receptive. *Potentia* is the individual's specific susceptibility to affections by others as much as it is its power to affect others (through one's acts or one's sheer presence). In combination this makes for the fundamental heteronomy in the constitution of the individual in Spinoza, whose being is both an expression of its own *potentia* and at the same time *modulated* by all the other individuals (and their *potentia*) in its vicinity – which fits well with the present scheme of a relational social ontology. Hence the individual in Spinoza is always a manifestation *within* a dynamic of unfolding reciprocal affect in a situation, co-dependent on the respective powers (*potentia*) of *all* the individuals involved.

By the same token, Spinoza's understanding of individuation has both a spatial (or "extensive") and a temporal dimension to it. The "extensive" dimension figures prominently in the Deleuzian reception of Spinoza, as Deleuze stresses that an individual is itself nothing but a composition of smaller individuals in specific "relations of motion and rest".[9] Deleuze puts this in the terms of reciprocal dynamics of *potentia*:

> An existing mode[10] is defined by a certain capacity for being affected (III, post. 1 and 2). When it encounters another mode, it can happen that this other mode is 'good' for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary decomposes it and is 'bad' for it. […] Accordingly, it will be said that its power of acting or force of existing increases or diminishes, since the power of the other mode is added to it, or on the contrary is withdrawn from it, immobilizing and restraining it (IV, prop. 18 dem.) (Deleuze 1988, pp. 49-50).

This indicates that in a relational ontology of affect, the notion of the individual is itself variable. It shifts according to the prevalent level of individuation for the explication of a social configuration. Such a configuration may sometimes be comprised of humans, of parts of humans, of couples, teams, families, corporations, or states and so on. This is particularly fruitful for the analysis of structural power phenomena in social theory as it enables an understanding of the fundamental heteronomy of the individual on different *scales and layers of relatedness* but without rendering the individual *passive* or depriving it of an own (ontologically constitutive) power.

There is also a temporal dimension of individuation evident in Spinoza's theory. An individual's specific affective capacity (*potentia*) is also a product of the *history* of this individual's past relations of affecting and being affected. The temporal structure of individuation is what makes for a relative trans-situative coherence of one and the same individual passing through various situations and

contexts of relatedness over time, thereby counterweighing to some extent the transience and variability of individuals. How an individual can affect and be affected is thus a result of its past trajectory of involvement in affective dynamics. This diachronic structure implies a kind of "memory" for specific patters of affectivity in past relations. This "memory" – which has nothing to do with mental representations of past events – works by means of *inscription* of past patterns of affect into the *potentia*, which are thus present *as potentials* in current relations.[11] This suggests an account of how past affective patterns of interaction are not identically repeated, but act as *tendencies* in present relations. This diachronic structure of the genesis of an individual's *potentia* can in fact be extended to an analysis of social structures such as gendered or racialized interaction patterns inscribed and perpetuated as patterns of affective interaction, also within institutions or social domains of other kinds (Mühlhoff in press).

Mapping relational affect: Affective arrangements and micro-dispositifs

It is the goal of this paper to demonstrate how the relational conception of affect can be applied in concrete social contexts to facilitate analysis and critique of contemporary governmental strategies. To this end, one further theoretical pre-consideration is required. Just as little as affect is – in our theoretical view – a matter of the isolated individual, it is neither a matter solely pertaining to isolated binary relations. Rather, affect as a relational dynamic generally transpires in situations, in micro-social scenes, within smaller or larger contexts and configurations of individuals, their histories, and various other material or non-material elements forming relatively stable domains or milieus. When, in the quotation above, Deleuze speaks of "encounters" between individuals whose specific composition of *potentia* either "increases" or "diminishes" one another, such an encounter does not unfold in empty space. Rather, it will be situated and mediated in a meshwork of past and present relations, in a field of affective capacities of many constellated individuals, in which certain affective dynamics might be rendered more likely and others less. Such a situatedness also involves what might seem to be "ephemeral" elements such as moods and up-to-the-minute affective dynamics, on the political or economic embeddedness of the situation, on prevailing atmospheres, on all sorts of materials and equipment, and medial constraints of the encounter (such as in online platforms, on the telephone) etc.[12]

In short, we propose analyzing relational dynamics of affect with respect to their embedding in a spatial and structural configuration of various elements and their capacities to affect and be affect, all together composing a *local sphere of affective resonance* in which certain affective dynamics between any number of individuals might be amplified, while others might be diminished.[13] We refer to such a relational configuration as an *affective arrangement*.[14]

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The term "arrangement" is first of all the English translation of Deleuze's and Guattari's notions of "agencement" and "agencement machinique", as proposed by Ian Buchanan (1997; 2015). In Deleuze and Guattari's work, the concept of agencement or arrangement does not so much refer to an assembly or organic unity of parts – as would be suggested by the English term *assemblage* – but to a specifically composed layout of *heterogeneous* elements that are brought together according to a mode of composition that is *not* homogenizing (cf. Nail 2017, p. 22). While an assemblage flattens its parts into an organic unity, an *agencement* is a fragmentary whole: a concatenation of components that remain disparate no matter how densely they are entangled. Yet, there is a certain mode of relatedness that holds the elements together. In the cases of interest to us – in *affective* arrangements – this combining force is a concrete tangle of relations of affecting and being affected. In their dynamic interplay, the elements of an affective arrangement sustain a local sphere of affective intensity and thereby both trigger and structure characteristic agentive routines. Accordingly, both actions and affections are locally instigated and modulated by an affective arrangement.

Combining the Spinozist conceptions of affect and *potentia* with this idea of an affective arrangement yields a theoretical framework where the unfolding of an individual's *potentia* is always embedded in, and co-dependent on, a surrounding milieu of objects and individuals, comprising a heterogeneous field of affective capacities. From the theoretical point of view of Spinozism, this arrangement as a whole comprises a relative sphere of *immanence*,[15] at the same time it highlights the internal heterogeneity of its composition – not by means of an ontic distinction of its objects but by *effective* distinction on the level of mutually increasing or diminishing, affirming or undermining, resonant or dissonant affective capacities.

In referring to an arrangement specifically as an *affective* one we are emphasizing that already established affective dynamics and interactive patterns are vital to the arrangement. Thresholds of affective intensity demarcate affective arrangements from their surroundings, so that entering into an affective arrangement comes with a notable change in the degree and intensity with which a person affectively "resonates".[16] Mundane examples are parties, clubs, sports or art events, even lively classroom discussions, meetings at work, etc. – the tangle of affective relations on the inside of such constellations is intense and "gripping" as opposed to the lower intensity on their outside. We use "immersion" as a term for capturing the intensive involvement or embeddedness of individuals within affective arrangements. More precisely, immersion is a specific *mode* of affective involvement which is characterized by a spectrum of subjective experiential qualities ranging from uneasiness, to absorption, up to the complete amalgamation of one's temporary "being" within an intensive meshwork of augmenting or diminishing, positive or negative affective relations (Mühlhoff in press; Mühlhoff & Schütz 2017).

A second systematic reference point of the concept of "affective arrangement" is Foucault's notion of a *dispositif.* With this notion, Foucault too refers to a heterogeneous ensemble of elements, constituting a whole – that is, a "system of relations" of these elements.[17] He uses this concept for his analysis of (historically) specific power formations in which social, political and institutional practices, discourses of truth and subjective relations to self and others are instigated as part of a decentralized apparatus of power. Yet Foucault's construal of the dispositif makes little reference to the aspect of situated affective dynamics, the *hic et nunc* of patterns of affecting and being affected that have been established between elements of the dispositif. These patterns are *not* reducible to the comparatively static aspects of a dispositif on Foucault's list, they form an ephemeral yet constitutive part of the dispositif at hand. This holds all the more if the scope of analysis is less that of a larger historical formation – as it is evident in many of Foucault's works –, but geared towards short-term micro- and meso-social constellations as in the example of work places (teamwork, office culture) we are going to discuss in the next sections. An affective arrangement is therefore a kind of "micro-dispositif" in Foucault's sense but with a dynamic register of affective potentials as its key dimension. That is, the register of *affective capacities* (*potentia*) of all the individuals, together with the already established affective relations between these individuals are vital to arrangements of this kind.

The theoretical setup outlined in this section does not only propose certain concepts – such as affective arrangement, or an individual's affective capacity – but also a methodological perspective. This perspective is based on the assumption that individuals are modulated *in situ* by means of reciprocal affective dynamics in local micro-social contexts. These modulations are part of larger trans-situative strategic ensembles, reproducing overarching patterns. The question we are thus focusing is, how do relations of exploitation in labor, and structures of differential social roles (e.g. in gendered interactions, or along power hierarchies in corporations) get actualized and perpetuated on the level of affective micro-interactions? We claim that in certain affective arrangements, affective relationality itself emerges as an operative register of a strategic power, in which the thinking, acting and feeling of individuals is subtly shaped, "nudged" and governed. The word "strategic" indicates that this type of power does not operate as *power-over*, but in the immanence of the reciprocal (affective) interplay within the respective arrangement. In the next section, we will illustrate this point by focusing on the example of affective arrangements implemented by Human Resource Management (HRM) in modern workplace contexts.

Working arrangements: The affects of post-Fordist work cultures

We will now apply our concepts to the discussion of two examples of affective arrangements in contemporary work cultures – first a typical setting of part-time work in an office workplace operating under the teamwork concept, second the immersive work- and lifestyle of the contemporary IT and

startup sector. To this end, we draw on recent literature of workplace studies and their critical reflection from sociological, cultural studies and social philosophy perspectives.

Case Study 1: Teamwork – Claire's example

Claire is a 33-year-old marketing professional, working as a part-time employee for a telecommunications company in Brisbane, Australia. She is one of the volunteers of a series of work place ethnographic interviews conducted by Melissa Gregg in her 2011 study *Work's Intimacy.* In a fashion typical for most contemporary jobs in the knowledge-work sector, work at Claire's marketing department is organized in project teams, that is, in small groups of co-workers gathered around a short- or mid-range project goal. Compared to older styles of corporate organization, teamwork is typically described as a non-hierarchical and quasi-social mode of interaction, "in which all colleagues work together, sharing responsibility for the organization" (Gregg 2011, p. 74).

Initially, Claire decided to work part-time (Monday to Wednesday) in order to be able to look after her child the other two days of the week (ibid., p. 49). In her interviews with Gregg, however, she reports that

> 'Thursday and Friday are my days off, but at the moment […], Thursday morning is a bit of a catch-up morning for me anyway to send out a lot of emails and get a lot of things moving so that I don't have to wait until Monday before I can get momentum happening on things' (Gregg 2011, p. 49).

Claire describes this unpaid extra work as her free choice. Without it, Gregg reports, "her return to the office on a Monday would be 'really stressful'".

> 'Yeah, and that's why I do it; it's not because there's pressure from the management team to do it at all, but it's more just for my own sanity.' […] 'I will sleep better if I spend an hour or an hour and a half at night just getting on top of that, otherwise I will wake up at 4 a.m. in the morning and I'll be just spinning around my head' (Gregg 2011, pp. 49-50).

Gregg, who saw Claire twice in the space of 12 months for interviews, reports that in the course of this one year, Claire's home working practices even extended to the evening hours of regular working days and "most of the weekend" (ibid., pp. 49, 77). Claire says that together with her partner, who is a mortgage broker, she would spend "evenings sitting on our couch with our laptops on our laps doing work", explaining that this is a practice "that just keeps us sane" (ibid., p. 50). Wireless internet and laptop computers enable Claire to follow her work in various locations and situations at home – from sitting on the couch to hanging out in bed or spending some time "out the front playing cars with my two-year-old on the driveway" (ibid.). As Gregg explains, the possibility to stay on top of things in all these micro-situations, enabled by new media technologies, is to Claire "a way of being at peace and at ease with the family" (ibid.). Connectivity together with the part-time arrangement is *creating* specific practices of sharing time with both her partner and her son while staying "on top" of her workload.

This custom set of long-grown familial habits and domestic practices subtly integrating work duties of both partners into an intimate life at home is one aspect of how Claire's work engagement is sustained and stabilized in a specific *arrangement* or personal and affective relations. The development Gregg reports in the course of one year demonstrates how affective relationality together with practices and habits may *arrange themselves* around a certain set of external constraints in a reciprocal process of leveling and balancing. This process of arranging is neither fully passive nor active on the part of Claire or her family. Partly, things just "fall into place", partly things might be initially debated, then deliberately chosen. Apparently, both is true: The ability to do some work from home sustains Claire's family life – and the ability to have some familiar intimacy while working sustains Claire's work commitment. Claire is an example case of how work might blend into leisure in a way which is – as a *form of life* – sustained by a multi-faceted ensemble of practices, media structures and personal relations through which work entangles with the realm of the "private" and thus gains "intimacy".

Yet the family and home sphere is only half of the arrangement of personal and affective relations that characterizes Claire's work situation. It turns out that the other half is the work place and her team of co-workers itself. Analyzing it as a stylized arrangement of affective relations can reveal why staying connected with work even from home is so important to Claire. "The team", as Gregg states, is "paramount" in Claire's description of why she logs in to her emails from home in her free time. "A sense of responsibility to others motivates her 'to keep an eye on what is happening'". (ibid., p. 76) This is an important clue as Claire insists that she is not formally expected or directly ordered to be online outside her office hours. Yet there is a more subtle and implicit form of coercion at work, resulting from the supplementation of hierarchical work relations (with a top-down assignment of tasks and duties) by *social* relations in teamwork (whose logic is that of being a reliable team mate, being motivated and motivating others, being resonative).

> If the flexible, decentralized workplace has freed employees from the omnipotent surveillance of the boss […], today it is 'the team' of co-workers that bear witness to everyday work efforts. The team is the mythically egalitarian playing field in which all colleagues work together, sharing responsibility for the organization. It is one of several coercive dimensions of office culture exacerbated by new media technologies (Gregg 2011, p. 74).

In teamwork, vertical power relations and direct subordination between managers and workers are replaced (or perhaps only masked) by a network of horizontal and personal relations between collaborators (see also Liu 2004). "The perception that other co-workers might be waiting for responses and actions is a recurring reason employees give for logging in to read email outside the office", Gregg reports from her interviews (2011, p. 74). Claire's example gives some hints as to the complexity of affective and psychic dynamics that are involved in such a constellation:

> Claire acknowledged that even though the company was 'very good with part-time employment, it's still not the majority of people. And no one else really is going to remember what days you work and

what days you don't.' Her sensitivity to others' schedules compels her to stay connected: 'Even though you've got an 'out of office' on … it still can be a bit hard for people.' Staying in touch therefore had the twin benefit of being 'appreciated by the team and it makes me feel better' (Gregg 2011, p. 77).

Claire is particularly glad about her opportunity of a part-time arrangement with the company, saying "it is not a typical situation to be able to do a project-based job and only be there half of the week" which is why she "feel[s] very thankful" and "want[s] to make it work" (ibid., p. 51). This thankfulness blends seamlessly into the attitude of "sensitivity to the others' schedules", suggesting she is even feeling guilty knowing that she is the aberrant one with her exceptional work hours. This mutual entanglement of gratitude, guilt and commitment is fueled even further by her basic need for recognition that is evident in her longing for "being appreciated by the team". Given her exceptional work arrangement, Claire goes on explaining:

> [T]here will be people there that will send something through on a Thursday and they might need it close of business on Friday. So it is good to be able to – if it is urgent and only I can do it – I can actually look at it or I can make sure it is sent on to the right people (Gregg 2011, p. 77).

This "conviction that 'only I can do it'", as Melissa Gregg points out, "gets to the heart of teamwork's interpellative power" (ibid., p. 77). It is a very specific form of self-relation and self-narration of Claire's way of being involved, entangled and harnessed into the real-time dynamics of team relations with her specific skills and affective capacities even when she is at home. It is not even necessary that *really* only she can do a certain task. The *subjective* impression that "only I can do it" suffices, in principle, to make for its implicitly coercive effect. Together with the constellation of wanting to be appreciated by the team, wanting to make the part-time arrangement work, and sharing responsibility for the overall project, this form of self-relation might be referred to as a form of *subjectivity* which is produced and exploited in the meshwork of affective dynamics in Claire's teamwork arrangement. Through the constitution of this form of subjectivity, a modality of *governing* employees emerges in teamwork formations. It is based on *involving* everyone into a productive *arrangement* of micro-relations and interpersonal practices based less on their technical skills (their knowledge, their hand-crafting skills etc.), but on a specific *affective* engagement as well. That is, a spectrum of personal *affective capacities* beyond servility and discipline becomes the driving force of teamwork relations (in the case of Claire: need for recognition, disposition towards feeling guilty, etc.). Yet the *effect* of this engagement as it unfolds in the immanence of a strategic ensemble of affective micro-powers might no less be that of subtle coercion and servility.

The transition from hierarchical forms of corporate organization to a teamwork based topology is one of the most ground-breaking transformations of capitalist production in the 20st century. In today's so called "networked corporations" (Liu 2004), production is no longer organized as a chain of piecemeal tasks, but takes everyone in shared responsibility to have the perspective of the whole process in mind.[18] Individual roles and the distribution of specialized tasks within a team are supposed to be a self-regulating in processes of reciprocal feedback-loop controlling (Bröckling 2008). Since the 1990s,

a full-blown discourse in "Human Resource Management" has emerged, inventing strategies to stimulate and facilitate team collaboration according to this vision.[19] Far from leaving it to self-organization, a trend of training teamwork is evident in techniques such as "team building" and "bonding events", coachings in networking soft-skills. HRM strategies even went so far as to the implementation of holistic "company cultures" or "sub-cultural" spheres at work places, orchestrated by companies' "change managers" and "Wow!" departments (Gregg 2011, p. 75). The core idea behind these instruments is to make employees engage not only with their work but with one another. That is, everyone is supposed to be immersed in their work as a full person, with their full range of social and affective capacities and their *potentia* – fully "committed" in short.

In critical analyses of post-Fordist work cultures, be it under the name of a *New Spirit of Capitalism* (Boltanski & Chiapello 2007) or of *The Soul at Work* (Berardi 2009), it is evident that affective relations between co-workers and *within* work environments have become increasingly central in techniques of contemporary work place governance. Genealogically, the teamwork paradigm emerged already in the 1970s and 1980s due to the influence of post-World War cybernetic and group dynamic research (Bröckling 2008). In our first case study, we were revisiting this basic form of organization in an updated perspective derived from Melissa Gregg's recent work, highlighting how digital communication and new media technology of the 21st century facilitate team collaboration in a new form. By the same token, we are extending the classic understanding of "affective" and "immaterial labor"[20] in pointing out that not so much the *product* of this work, but the very *modality* of workers' engagement is an affective one in these arrangements. Teamwork strategically stimulates and harnesses the specific affective capacities of co-workers and their social bonds as a resource of energy, exploitable to increase commitment, responsibility and extra work-ours mostly without managerial orders. From Claire's example it is visible how this might make work relations not only grow into more *intimate* relations, but also how it makes work relations *entangle* with private life spheres, forming a whole arrangement of diverse relations (co-workers, partner, child), practices (doing work from various places and situations), spaces (office, home, bed, driveway, couch), narratives ("only I can do it") and psychological complexes ("sensitivity to others", wanting to be appreciated, thankfulness, guilt) of several people.

Case Study 2: "Life at Google"

Our second case study will emphasize the importance of a holistic account of work environments as affective micro-dispositifs. We refer to it as "Life at Google", a term derived from the company's own wording on their website.[21] *Google Inc.* is a tech company in the New Economy, and it is well known that alongside its pioneering technological achievements, the New Economy has always been a major innovator in Human Resource Management. In order to *facilitate* technological innovations at such a

speed, some of the New Economy's most valuable assets are its constant inventions of new forms of organizing, governing and capitalizing the personal potentials of their employees. Yet around the turn to the 21st century and after the crash of the dot-com bubble in 2000, it was not enough anymore to subjectify employees along the dimensions of availability and commitment, as could be seen in the teamwork dispositif described above (cf. Gill 2007; Ross 2001; Terranova 2010). Instead, *creativity* became the new prime target of work organization. The dominant HR ideology of the last two decades, in line with the new hegemony of a "start-up culture", is madly focusing on open spaces stimulating unexpected ideas, putatively cultivating a "power of diversity" (Gardenswartz & Rowe 1994) and encouraging even deviant forces – which are seen as forces of innovation.[22] An obvious obstacle is that creative processes can be planned or enforced even less than interpersonal affective bonds in team constellations. In fact, they require other, more radical techniques of stimulation and orchestration in specific affective arrangements.

For the engineers at Google, the company has been setting up architectural and interior arrangements best described as "kindergarten style" work environments with toys, colorful bikes, billiard tables, Star Trek posters, and "a large, terribly fake-looking replica of SpaceShipOne hanging in the middle of the main building and a replica dinosaur skeleton standing outside" at the main campus in Moutain View, California (Swartz 2006). In the mid 2000s, Google became famous for these affective arrangements that turn the work place into a *life environment* where work is supposed to feel like *play* and where the often 20 to 25-year-old employees coming straight from college spend as much time as possible (cf. ibid.; Terranova 2010). Loosely connecting to the spirit of the hacker movement and the play instinct of the middle class "millennial generation", this environment has been advertised in Google's hiring campaigns as an *extension of College life:* The company was providing a holistic environment, covering for practical needs from free food, laundry service, on campus health care, sport sites, up to a corporate bus service picking people up at home in the morning. For the (wealthy class of) IT engineers, the company has created a space not only for work but for fun, recreation, leisure and the pursuit of one's own projects.

Google's "playful" work environments – which have since been adopted and imitated by the growing hegemony of a start-up culture in the IT branches and beyond – are exemplary of a local arrangement designed to *immerse* employees with their personal and affective potentials, relations and impulses into a productive apparatus of human relations, thus making their energies exploitable for company benefit. While teamwork stimulates and harnesses *affective bonds* of co-workers around the felt qualities of reciprocal reliability, guilt, appreciation, insecurities, shared commitment, the affective arrangement of a "life at Google" additionally stimulates a "play instinct", and, by that means, "creativity". In play, three aspects of subjective involvement are combined: (1) Being driven by a deeply rooted, affectively grounded fascination for technology; (2) the opportunity for non-

competitive, "happy-go-lucky" experimentation and trying beyond market-strategy and economic worries; (3) a specific affective interpersonal dynamic of "positive" and amplifying social interactions and identifications, forming a register of belonging to a subcultural sphere of resonance (see Mühlhoff in press). "Play instinct" is seen as a personal capital – as an employee's marketable set of affective potentials – which is at the core of the tech industry's innovation culture. It is remarkable to see how in this formation employees are less addressed as experts of a specialized knowledge or skill-set, and neither as subjects of discipline and obedience. Rather, they are addressed, produced and harnessed as carriers of *affective potentials*. The HRM strategy evident in Google's specific setup is to create a relational arrangement where these potentials can unfold, promising to the employees an environment for what feels like self-expression and self-organization, while implementing subtle control of the directions in which these forces are allowed to unfold and a decentralized structure of their exploitation and valorization (see Deleuze 1992).

However, as critical voices suggest, this is only one side of the coin. "Google keeps employees by treating them like kids" is the title of a viral article by the programmer, entrepreneur and internet activist Aaron Swartz (1986 – 2013). He points out that the immersive stimulation of a playful work ethos at Google is not only an ephemeral and situative modulation or intensification of certain behavior traits and affective capacities. Evidence suggests that it is a systematic strategy of "infantilization" of employees as persons, and this implies a long lasting, *subjectivity forming* feedback of this immersive involvement on the individuals:

> The dinosaurs and spaceships certainly fit in with the infantilizing theme, as does the hot tub-sized ball pit that Googlers can jump into and throw ball fights. Everyone I know who works there either acts childish (the army of programmers), enthusiastically adolescent (their managers and overseers), or else is deeply cynical (the hot-shot programmers). But as much as they may want to leave Google, the infantilizing tactics have worked: they're afraid they wouldn't be able to survive anywhere else (Swartz 2006).

However accurate this description might be in the case of Google, it points to an important dimension of affect-based corporate governance in general: Immersive environments actively *produce* – each in their own way – individuals with a suitable, mutually stabilizing structure of affective capacities and subjective self-relation. This also connects to what Melissa Gregg refers to as "coercive dimension" of contemporary office culture (Gregg 2011, p. 74). Although these forms of collaboration are subjectively based on free, autonomous, fun and personal interactions on eye-level, they are *not* free of coercion. The techniques of coercion have just become more subtle and implicit compared with how old-school disciplinary regimes outwardly oppressed individuals.

As we will argue below, this new mode of coercion is based on a form of *affective subjectivation* – that is, genesis of subjectivity in affective relations –, which is molded in such a way that subjective experience of fun and self-responsible decisions are seamlessly aligned with what is of benefit to the

company. In our examples this constitution of subjectivity consists of two aspects: (1) One is the creation of interpersonal environments, selectively stimulating, amplifying and orchestrating aspects of the individuals' *potentia* to unfold in a meshwork of affective relations. From teamwork to the "Life at Google" this means creating affective arrangements designed to instigate intensive attachments and joyful self-experience within in these relations. The second aspect is that over time, the environment as a whole is feeding back on the *potentia* (affective capacity) of the individuals, creating an affective *lock-in effect*. When this lock-in effect sets in, affective capacities, intrinsic motivations and long-grown life-work arrangements can be exploited, from the extension of working hours to what might be called a strategic *infantilization* of employees. It is now time to ask how these case studies might inform a perspective on power and governmentality in the post-Fordist economy.

Conclusion: Affect, Power, Immersion

There are two major conclusions to be drawn from our analyses, one leading in the direction of critique and empowerment, the other emphasizing theoretical consequences for the field of affect studies and social philosophy. First, our examples showcase the potency of concepts such as "relational affect" and "affective arrangement" to reveal a contemporary form of power relations and a concurrent constitution of subjectivity as affective and discursive self-relations in certain environments. As vignettes they exemplify how knowledge work cultures in the post-Fordist era, most prevalent in the tech, media and advertising industries, are maintained by a form of *governance* (and governmentality) operating in a register of situated, horizontal and potentially pleasurable affective relations. We refer to this governance principle as *immersion* in order to highlight that the mechanism of personal and potentially self-amplifying involvement absorbs individuals in a form of dense relatedness and concurrent subjectivity which thwarts the possibilities for critical distancing and sober reflections from an outside perspective on one's own way of being involved (Mühlhoff in press; Mühlhoff & Schütz 2017). Immersive governance by means of strategically arranged affective dynamics does not rely on power-over relations such as explicit managerial orders (which could in principle be opposed or criticized on an equally explicit level). Instead, it relies on the relational *modulation* of individual behavior by selective stimulation and intensification of the affective potentials and character traits each individual brings along – from dispositions to self-sacrifice or feelings of guilt to the entrepreneurial play instinct.

Driven by the hope to facilitate critique and empowerment, our analysis aims at equipping the involved and affected individuals with a conceptual toolkit at their own disposal. Suitable analytic concepts are a prerequisite for making relations of affecting and being affected visible and addressable *as* micro-techniques of governance. From the point of view of employees long accustomed to the promises of team play and flexible work relations, such a conclusion is not something that comes to

mind immediately. The deployment of affective techniques displaces the aspect of governance into the inexplicit – thus evading easy analytic access – and into the personal, where it is masked behind what is supposed to feel like inherent motivation or, in case of failure, comes across as *personal* insufficiency. Direct articulation of structural failures, let alone acts of disobedience, resistance, and empowerment in these arrangements, face the paradox of going against one's own professional self-image and threaten one's friendly attachments to colleagues.

Secondly, with a systematic perspective in mind, our case studies prompt for a theorization of affect as a *register* of local micro-dispositifs of power. This hints at the connection of theories of affect and theories of subjectivating power that is still largely a blind spot between affect studies, post-structuralist theory of the subject, governmentality studies and post-Marxist critique. Initially, the "turn to affect" was driven by a rather anti-poststructuralist euphoria to find in affect a notion overcoming the "deadlock" of (misunderstood) subjectivity (see Massumi 1995; 2002). At the close of the second decade of the 21st century, however, it is increasingly evident that affect is a politically ambivalent notion.[23] In this paper, we intended to show how affects (even positive affects) can be stimulated as a resource of inherent forces in apparatuses of power and exploitation. Whether affect is an emancipatory and transformative force or a register of exploitation and harnessing is thus not a property of affect *per se* but depends on how affective dynamics are entangled in local *micro-dispositifs*. This is why uncovering affective strategies of power is a matter of studying neither single individuals and relations, nor macroscopic "dispositifs" of societal and historic scale alone. The relevant scope is that of the meso-scale *affective arrangements,* of micro-social spheres and their meshworks of situated human relations.

Most notably, the form of governmentality evident in the knowledge work cultures we studied has undermined the classic dichotomies of work vs. leisure, production vs. consumption, duty vs. pleasure. Central achievements of the social welfare states of the Fordist and "New Deal" economic eras, such as the spatial separation of work from home along with the temporal separation of work time from free time are abandoned without notable resistance. This is what makes critique so difficult. As a starting point, our analysis suggests that this "voluntary" dissolution of boundaries must be read as symptom of a transformed mechanism of subject-genesis in affective relations, evident in modern forms of corporate governance.[24] Subjects are produced as carriers of specific capacities to affect and be affected in the *immanence* of an affective arrangement which consists of both affective and discursive elements. Consequently, this calls for a suitable kind of *immanent* critique, as the modality of power evident in the formations of "The New Spirit of Capitalism" acts *on* people from without, but *through peoples' affects.*

We refer to the form of subject genesis evident in these formations as *affective subjectivation.* This term demarcates a theoretical perspective from which Spinoza's "individual" (as constituted in affective relations) appears as the site of a relationally co-dependent and situated self-relation which is as much affective as it is discursive. Along these lines, the Spinozist conception of relational affect together with the perspective facilitated by the concept of *affective arrangements* provides a framework that can be combined with a Foucault-style analysis and critique of power formations. The dynamics of *potentia* unfolding in relations of affecting and being affected is the micro-social end point (or "zoom level") in apparatuses of relational and productive power. Our approach therefore allows introducing a concept of affect to critical social theory. Following this route further, as one of us argued in detail elsewhere, brings us to a theory of "immersive power", which is a modality of post-disciplinary power dominant in the micro-dispositifs of post-Fordist work cultures in the 21st century (see Mühlhoff in press). A lived and embodied critique of this form of governance, however, can only be presaged by theoretical work like this. In order to dare an adaptation of Foucault's (1997) notion of critique to these scenarios: If governance hijacks the way individuals are capable of affecting and being affected, empowerment calls for a collective practice based on a shared will "*not to be affected like this*" anymore.

Notes

[1] Spinoza 1677, *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata.*
[2] See Spinoza 1677 *Ethics*, parts I–III, cf. also Deleuze 1990.
[3] As a matter of fact, historically Spinoza was an explicit opponent of Descartes.
[4] References to Spinoza's *Ethics* follow the common citation scheme using the work's internal segmentation in parts (I-V), propositions ("prop."), scholia ("schol."), proofs ("dem."), definitions ("def.") and others.
[5] For detailed elaborations on this point see Deleuze 1990, pp. 91–95, 217–224; Kwek 2015 and Mühlhoff (in press). In Spinoza's *Ethics*, this interpretation refers to the group of propositions in part III, prop. 49–59 and part IV, prop. 33, which cannot be reconstructed here in more detail.
[6] For the debate on immanence and immanent causation in Spinoza cf. *Ethics*, part I, prop. 18; Deleuze 1990 and, for example, Melamed 2013; Saar 2013.
[7] For the concept of "affective resonance" see in more detail, Mühlhoff 2015.
[8] See *Ethics* III, post. 1 and 2; Deleuze 1988, pp. 49-50; Kwek 2015; Mühlhoff (in press).
[9] See *Ethics* II axioms and lemmata after prop. 13; Deleuze 1988, pp. 91–92, 123.
[10] A (finite) "mode" (modus) is Spinoza's term for individual.
[11] Technically, a non post-Aristotelian notion of potentiality is needed here, which may be taken from Deleuze 1994. See also Protevi 2013 and Mühlhoff 2015 on this point.
[12] Cf. also the related debate in analytical philosophy on "situated affectivity", and on embodied, embedded, enactive and extended mind theories. See, for instance, Griffiths & Scarantino 2009; Mühlhoff 2015 and Slaby 2016 explore some of the resonances between these theoretical perspectives.
[13] For the concept of "affective resonance" see Mühlhoff 2015. This is not a metaphorical term but a theoretical concept apt for describing the reciprocal modulation of entities in dynamic relations of affecting an being affected.
[14] Introducing the concept of an "affective arrangement", we here recapitulate briefly what we elaborated in detail in Slaby, Mühlhoff & Wüschner 2017.
[15] More precisely: Of immanent causality in its overall ensemble of internal relations of affecting and being affected.
[16] Cf. Seyfert (this volume) for more detailed considerations on the role of affective intensity within socio-technical arrangements. As we do as well, Seyfert takes key hints from Massumi 1995. See also Seyfert 2012, where he proposes the term "affectif" for constellations similar to the ones we call affective arrangements.

[17] Foucault 1980, translation modified: The French "dispositif" was translated as "apparatus", we substituted the now broadly recognized term "dispositif" again. See Anderson 2014, ch. 2 for a recent attempt to turn Foucault's dispositif directly into a concept for theorizing affect and affective relationality.

[18] Cf. Liu 2004, pp. 45-46; and for a popular mainstream engagement, Tapscott 2014.

[19] See for instance Gardenswartz & Rowe 1994; Boxall et al. 2007. As examples of critical engagements in management studies, cf. Knights & McCabe 2003.

[20] Lazzarato 1996; Hardt 1999. For updated and refined discussions of affective and immaterial labor in the context of post-Fordism and digitized capitalism in the 21st century, see Terranova 2004; Dowling, Nunes & Trott 2007.

[21] Availbale from: http://careers.google.com. [20 March 2017].

[22] Given the well-documented prevalence of white, male, middle class employees in the tech sector, talk of "diversity" and "deviant forces" has an ideological ring to it in this context. Cf. Terranova 2010; Cooper 2000.

[23] Feminist sociologist Clare Hemmings (2005) was among the earliest to point this out in a critical essay on the affective turn.

[24] For the notions of subjectivation and subjectivity, cf. Foucault 1982;1984.

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