

Organizing for alterity: a netnography of #AlteritOrg

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Abstract

This is a thesis about “organizing for alterity” which it conceptualises as organizing with a difference—that is, in terms of *how* we go about organizing and *what* the outcomes of organizing might be. The thesis presents a critical analysis of #AlteritOrg, a community of practice identifying as a prototype Teal Organization, and adopting three Teal Organizing practices—self management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose (Laloux, 2014). In the light of this empirical setting, the thesis addresses questions pertaining to the principles and practices of organizing for alterity.

The findings come from a netnographic study (Kozinets, 2015) which includes 18 months of fieldwork. The data collection methods comprise 42 semi-structured interviews, participant observation and archival data analysis; fieldwork was also accompanied by reflexive diary studies. Based on a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, the thesis adopts a research position which is informed by critical performativity (Spicer, et al., 2009). In that spirit, and derived from the empirically-observed principles and practices of organizing for alterity, the thesis proposes eight qualitative markers that characterise alternative organizing.

The thesis relies on the value inherent in “alterity” as a heuristic for revealing new insights and deepening understanding into alternative organizing. Drawing conceptually on prefiguration—and prefigurative attempts at organizing—the thesis embraces Bloch’s ontology of Not-Yet-Being (1968) to account for an organizational alterity which is not formally predetermined. The study extends extant work on alternative organizing and, through its empirical analysis, deepens understanding of mainstream and critical discourses and practices of organizing. Furthermore, it extends knowledge of communities of practice and reveals them as valuable sites for developing knowledge about prefigurative theorisations of organizing.

Acknowledgements

I realise that so much of what inspires this thesis will go unremarked upon. This is no place for a ‘Hall of Shame’, in which I detail the shortcomings of organizations I have known and loved. Like many other workers, I was complicit in unthinkingly (re)producing their tired assumptions for too long; in these five lines I acknowledge them and thank them for the joy I now find away from them.

Instead, let this be a ‘Hall of Fame’. Oxford Brookes University has been an encouraging home for my research. I am grateful for my receipt of a Research Studentship, awarded in the name of the University’s 150th year celebrations, which has made my doctoral study possible. I hope that it will continue to be a place where scholars from around the world can boldly advance the research that matters most to them and share this with a body of students who are both curious and ambitious. My thanks are due to Dr David Bowen, Head of Doctoral Programmes at Oxford Brookes Business School, for the support he and his team have shown for my studies.

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At home, there have been two constants in my life. Firstly, Margaux—feline star of *Instagram*—has been a furry source of amusement and distraction. And secondly, my wife, Professor Helen Abbott, who has been a joyful source of inspiration and unwavering support. Alongside my doctoral study, Helen and I have experienced heartbreak and joy; sharing the brilliance and bravery of somebody so special has made each day of this research possible.

Finally, this thesis, in this form, would be entirely impossible without the great number of members of #AlteritOrg who have generously shared their expertise and enthusiasm for “organizing for alterity”, and for those beyond the community who have left their digital footprints across this strange land. The depth and detail of their anonymised contributions help present a compelling story of how different organizing might be; I respect their work without reservation.

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Prologue: “other eyes” and “strange lands”

A pair of wings, a different mode of breathing, which would enable us to traverse infinite space, would in no way help us, for, if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same senses, they would clothe in the same aspect as the things of the earth everything that we should be capable of seeing. The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is; and this we can contrive with an Elstir, with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star.

Marcel Proust (1923) [trans. Moncrieff, 1929: 159–160]

This is a thesis about organizing for alterity.

In order that we might share this journey together, I encourage the reader to conceptualise “organizing” as a set of discourses and practices (or means) by which a set of outcomes (or ends) are realised. The indivisible nature of the means and ends of organizing is central to this thesis; as is the possibility implicit within alterity. Alterity is a state of otherness—an essentially utopian project—which imagines human possibility as a totality beyond that which characterises the real. Together, “organizing for alterity” embraces the possibility of difference—difference in terms of *how* we go about organizing, and difference in terms of *what* the outcomes of this organizing might be. The thesis presents longitudinal, qualitative research carried out in #AlteritOrg—a community of practice whose members are both expert and engaged in organizing for alterity.

All theses are about organizing. Empirical data, theoretical commitments, argumentation, and inspiration negotiate with established academic conventions, university procedures, and a sense of disciplinary apprenticeship to achieve some semblance of intellectual organization. We might claim our own approach to organizing a thesis has been individual—for to do otherwise seems to denigrate its content—but the likelihood is that it has not been individual in any real sense. Ideas about organizing have as firm a grip over our respective areas of study within academic institutions as they do over our notionally individualised behaviours and actions. Yet, we are encouraged to placate our (un)conscious unease at this mass academic socialisation with rhetoric akin to having undertaken a “true voyage of discovery”. Whilst I do not want to detract from any sense of achievement that I

might feel in organizing this thesis, I want to be realistic about its achievements in terms of practicing what it preaches. This thesis might be considered uncomfortably conventional. It has, at various stages, relied on timelines, charts, and submitted to standardised, institutional progress reviews; and, it has taken inspiration from the work of others, and modelled its language, structure, and delivery on the work of those to whom it intends to speak.¹ But, in its defence, the research that underpins this thesis has engaged extensively with a community of practice that can (rightly) boast of alterity. It is, demonstrably, a community of practice that both confronts current organizational arrangements and nourishes new ones. Its members share in a “true voyage of discovery” which is (mostly) destined for an alterity hitherto uncharted.

¹ Increasingly, I am inspired by the commitment made to “writing differently” taken up by scholars (e.g. in the 2019 special issue of *Management Learning*)—I wish that Ruth Weatherall’s (2018) article on the doctoral thesis had been written sooner.

1. Introduction: armchair traveller to true voyager

Understanding the legacy of the mid-1800s is key to understanding how we conceptualise and theorise organizing today. Scholars point to the systemic processes that took hold during that time (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Reed, 2006; Starbuck, 2003) and the relentless development of the scientific tradition of industrial management (Bendix, 1974; Guillén, 1994). This perspective has become so deeply embedded in discourses and practices that it remains almost entirely constitutive of organizing in the global north today. However, there are growing calls for the origins of organizing to be reassessed, though few contributions mount any serious challenge to the ‘established consensus of the social and philosophical ideas marking the origin of organizational studies’ (Peltonen, et al., 2018: x). So, whilst the mainstream organizational theory that informs organizing is well-established, it is not uncontested. This thesis aligns itself with the trajectory of those theoretical developments which move towards identifying organizations as complex outcomes of contested processes (e.g. Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Morgan, 1986; Tsoukas, 2003). From this view, organizations might be thought of as ‘systems of coordinated action among individuals and groups whose preferences, information, interests or knowledge differ’; and the theories that help explain these systems must contend with the ‘conversion of conflict into cooperation . . . [and] . . . the mobilization of resources and the coordination of effort that facilitate the joint survival of an organization and its members’ (March and Simon, 1993: 2).

Organizations and organizing are not the same things; and by focusing on organizing—an approach pioneered by Weick (1969) to pursue a processual understanding of organization—this thesis joins scholars liberated from the study of organizations as formal administrative units structured by hierarchy and the division of labour for their effective functioning (Bengtsson, et al., 2009; Czarniawska, 2014; Parker, et al., 2014). My approach is to focus on organizing as ‘a heterogeneous and open-ended process . . . [which seeks] . . . regularity and patterning . . . [rather] . . . than a stable order of things’ (Peltonen, et al., 2018: xiv). This thesis reaches beyond the systemic processes of industrial management to connect with different ideas which have motivated different approaches to organizing. It interrogates the discourses and practices of a new empirical reality and explores how individuals approach, enact, embody, and evaluate the social relations that arise from their organizing behaviours and actions.

It is in that light that this thesis addresses some of the perceived shortcomings of research on organizing. To approach this task, the thesis presents a study of #AlteritOrg, a community of practice which puts in plain sight its own attempts at organizing. As a community of practice, its members care about (many of) the same things and organize themselves so they can learn about those things from each other (Handley, et al., 2006; Pyrko, et al., 2017). Through an exploration of theory and practice I reach a temporary resting place with the conception of “organizing for alterity” that shapes this thesis. Implicit in this conception is the idea that organizing gives rise to particular social relations; as such, this conception signals an attention to the means and the end/s of organizing—its processes *and* its outcomes. The thesis thus considers organizing as a whole; adopting an approach which sees no possibility in, nor makes any recourse to, dividing its means and end/s.

1.1 Framing the problem

Through the study of formal organizations (rather than the processes and outcomes which are constitutive of, and constituted by, organization) a canonical body of knowledge has been developed. This knowledge is framed by notions of linearity and rationality, and it is shrouded in assumptions about the extent to which control can be successfully exerted over individuals and organizations (Lanzara, 1998). While this knowledge informs organizing across and beyond the global north, discourses of economies (Piketty, 2013), social inequalities (Bauman, 2011), and politics (Cross, 2017)—as encapsulated in critiques of the neoliberal model (Chomsky, 1999; Hibou, 2015; Sennett, 2006)—suggest the incompleteness or inadequacy of this knowledge for advancing our stewardship of structures, resources, and people. And, since the fitness for purpose of organizing in its traditional form is no longer tacitly accepted (Dunbar and Starbuck, 2006; Greenwood and Miller, 2010; Reedy, et al., 2016; Suddaby, et al., 2011) empirical study of “alternative” organizing receives some valuable attention (Atzeni, 2012; Parker, et al., 2007, 2014). This is a field of scholarship which increasingly calls for further empirical work to deepen understanding and inform theoretical and conceptual development.

Knowledge about organizing, and how we might respond to claims of its lack of fitness for purpose, comes from a range of different perspectives. The dominant stream of scholarship—which frames the mainstream understanding of what it is to organize, and/or to do so alternatively—advocates a general focus on new organizational forms and their

common organizing characteristics. Invariably, this draws on discourses and practices of reducing managerial hierarchy and increasing organizational agility. This stream is founded on the deconstructionism of postmodernity, in which organizing breaks from the dominant assumptions (such as rationality and control) associated with modernist organizational theory (Clegg, 1990; Linstead, 2003). In agitating for new organizational forms, which adopt and adapt modernist principles in the context of a postmodern society (Lewin, et al., 1999; March and Simon, 1993), it signals that it acknowledges the relationship between the organizing body and its wider environment (Lewin and Volberda, 1999). A further stream of scholarship adopts a more critical approach to the contemporary challenges of organizing. This stream of scholarship awakens the possibility, envisaged in this thesis, of alterity. Burrell (1992: 92) states that alternative approaches to organizing might be motivated by ‘anarchism, syndicalism, the ecological movement, the co-operative movement, libertarian communism, self-help groups, or [. . .] feminism’, whilst Reedy and Learmonth (2009: 244) identify how ‘radical social ideas and grassroots movements’ help advance this field. Within this stream of scholarship, current organizational arrangements are confronted, and new discourses and practices are nourished; in a form of collective resistance to prevailing societal conditions, this stream of scholarship can be characterised by its shared, prefigurative ethos. In this context, prefiguration might be thought of as a ‘direct theory’ (Sturgeon, 1995: 36). A theory that theorises through doing; a process that orients its tactics directly according to a final goal (Derrida, 1982) inextricably linking the means and end/s of organizing.

“Organizing for alterity” differs from other approaches to organizing in that the alternative world is not formally predetermined; instead, the alternative world is developed through practice and may turn out differently everywhere. This makes defining alterity highly problematic. It does, however, lead to an important connection with Ernst Bloch’s ontology of Not-Yet-Being, in which nothing is predetermined. For Bloch, there is a fundamental element of indeterminacy which allows for development, novelty, intervention, and alternative outcomes. Bloch (1968: 281) explains, ‘[w]e live surrounded by possibility, not merely by presence’. The possibility of an alterity that is not formally predetermined can make theorising about organizing for alterity more difficult. But, acknowledging that ‘everyday organizing practices . . . remain relatively unexplored’ (Reedy, et al. 2016: 1555), this thesis welcomes the call to situate critically-oriented research about organizing in an

empirical setting (Spicer, et al., 2016; Parker and Parker, 2017) and to draw on new and/or emerging subjectivities of organizing.

1.2 Scoping the project

The research site was identified during a period of scoping and following exploratory conversations with gatekeepers. It is an unusual site, and not the kind of site typically taken up by critical organizational scholarship, so it befits an introduction which maps out for the reader the “strange lands” of this empirical setting.

1.2.1 Introducing #AlteritOrg

#AlteritOrg was established in 2015 by six volunteers and presents itself as an international community, facilitated by online communicative technologies. These volunteers were supported by a small amount of seed capital from a sympathetic organization who describe how they wanted to support a place where ideas about alternative organizing could be shared openly and freely, and where theorists and practitioners could exchange experiences about life in those organizations that were committing to similar processes of renewal. The volunteers planned to achieve this by authoring an online publication through which, by sharing stories, people and organizations could discover each other, learn about and contact each other, and begin to learn from and collaborate with one another.

As such, the six volunteers explicitly conceptualise #AlteritOrg as a community of practice².

This casts #AlteritOrg as a particular type of organization which exists to support those engaged in a specific approach (or set of approaches) to organizing—approaches that are variously described as “evolutionary” “reinventing”, “renewing”, and “transformatory”.

Members of the #AlteritOrg community are inspired by Frederic Laloux’s (2014) book *Reinventing organizations* and have developed themselves as a prototype *Teal Organization*. To do this, #AlteritOrg adopts self-management practices which it claims enable it to fully express its organizational purpose and to value and appreciate the skills and humanity of individual members. After four years, #AlteritOrg has built—and continues to build—an international network of thousands of collaborators; it remains wedded to

² Wenger, et al. (2002) consolidate understanding of communities of practice—groups of people who genuinely care about the same real-life problems or hot topics, and who on that basis interact regularly to learn together and from each other. People belong to communities of practice at the same time as they belong to other organizational structures; through shared practice, members engage in a collective process of learning.

self-management practices and committed to increasingly ambitious projects. Individual members continue to commit to learning in a social context (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which bolsters innovation and facilitates sharing and developing new knowledge (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbé, 2011a, 2011b; Pyrko, et al., 2017).

It is clear from engagement with #AlteritOrg that its core work resides in sparking connections between people and organizations. Individual membership is preconditioned on a degree of *expertise* in organizational renewal and an ongoing *engagement* in that field. Consequently, members tend to work in organizational development, organizational consultancy and/or coaching, some self-identify as organizational theorists engaged in practice, others are practitioners reaching out for new theoretical influences. #AlteritOrg describe how their work to “spark connections” is done in four key ways: (1) publishing journalistic-style articles on its website, sharing ideas from those engaged in organizational renewal; (2) facilitating online conversations, providing a technologically-enabled space for those engaged in similar work to meet up; (3) hosting an online forum, stimulating asynchronous discussion of ideas and opportunities and sharing experiences and resources; and, (4) compiling a calendar of events—internal to the organization, and careful curation of some external to the organization—which could be of interest to members. Through this work, and by continually reaching out to different people in different organizations, #AlteritOrg seeks to create an awareness amongst people and organizations that their efforts to develop alternative organizations do not exist in isolation. In doing this, #AlteritOrg promotes the idea of the presence of a social ecosystem—a growing network with its own collective intelligence and resources. Through engaging with, and activating, different component parts of this ecosystem, intelligence and resources can be amplified, and synergies can be explored and expanded between individuals, organizations, and larger scale social groups.

Three characteristics frame #AlteritOrg’s version of alterity: (1) it has no managers (e.g. individuals self-manage); (2) humanity is valued alongside rationality (e.g. the qualities of “heart and spirit” are respected in the same way as mainstream logic and reason); and, (3) it serves a global evolutionary movement (e.g. #AlteritOrg’s gaze extends far beyond its own organizational boundaries). #AlteritOrg has developed a set of operational structures and processes, derived from Holacracy (a self-management system created by Brian Robertson, 2015). Holacracy supports decentralised management and organizational

governance by distributing authority and decision-making powers throughout self-organizing teams rather than vesting them in a management hierarchy. #AlteritOrg members live and work in different time zones so that scheduling time is important. Different technological platforms (e.g. Mattermost, GlassFrog) facilitate written conversations, shared documents, shared workspace, and live video-meetings. Some face-to-face meetings are possible, and members travel when they can to connect at conferences and workshops. Work is arranged around projects, with responsibilities being allocated to roles rather than people. Online collaborative tools help build a working environment within which information, progress, and requests for advice can be openly shared. It is stated that, above all, members are to be trusted; and, once an individual has taken on a responsibility, they are not subject to any supervisory oversight. #AlteritOrg membership appears to be constantly changing and expanding. Beyond the core belief in Teal organisations, discourse frequently centres around a sense of calling through which members can express their individual life purpose as a result of their involvement with #AlteritOrg. Consequently, there are different levels of engagement. Some members are deeply embedded in the community and play a significant role in shaping its response to the world; they energize specific roles with functions and accountabilities in the operational and governance structure, devoting time and energy to caring for the whole of the community. Other members are more loosely connected; they might occasionally donate funds, write articles, share their own resources, host discussions, whilst almost all connect with each other through a Facebook-powered forum. #AlteritOrg members are all—essentially—unpaid volunteers, earning a living from their work elsewhere; but they describe how they are personally activated to contribute, by being at the forefront of human development around organizational consciousness.

1.2.2 Contextualising Teal Organizing

In his book, *Reinventing organizations*, Laloux (2014) makes a claim of the emergence of a new organizational model—he names it, “Teal”. Although I encountered this book in an academic context, I can imagine it might equally be found in an airport lounge to be read by disenchanted executives seeking a better life. The Teal worldview described by Laloux is an evolutionary one and stimulates understanding of an emerging form of organizing in the new society. He draws on insights from the work of developmental psychologists and analyses organizations from what he determines as an evolutionary perspective. Through its lively and engaging text, the book offers a glimpse of a new empirical reality in which

organizing is not something that is done *to* employees—rather, it is something that is done *by* employees.

At the heart of Laloux's work is a theoretical and empirical inquiry into what organizations would look like in the future given the history of human development. Laloux's empirical research surveys around fifty organizations. Of these organizations, a base line requirement is then required for Laloux to develop sustained theoretical engagement, namely: to have been operating for at least five years, with a minimum of one hundred employees, and with a significant number of organizational practices that were consistent with a Teal perspective. This narrows Laloux's focus to twelve organizations (spread across the world and operating in various sectors) from which he develops theoretical insight (derived from quantitative and qualitative engagement with publicly available organizational material, internal documents, interviews with organizational members, and observation). His analysis reveals three organizational breakthroughs as characterising Teal organizations and distinguishes them from other organizations. The three organizational breakthroughs are (1) self-management, (2) wholeness, and (3) evolutionary purpose.

Throughout the book, Laloux unpacks these breakthroughs at length. *Self-management* refers to an organizational model in which all people have the full capacity to self-author what they do. Laloux contrasts the alterity of Teal with mainstream organizational practices, in which authoritative leaders command subordinates—he argues that, in Teal organizations, power is shared by all organizational members regardless of their positions. Individuals contribute to the organization based on their unique strengths and potential contribution, rather than according to a specific job title and/or function. *Wholeness* refers to the notion of bringing one's authentic self to the professional organizational environment. Laloux discusses the prevailing politics and power dynamics in traditional organizations and describes how it is natural for individuals to self-protect and become defensive in their interactions with other organizational members. This, he claims, is removed in self-managing organizations where individuals freely share their ideas, engage in consensus-reaching processes, and take actions with great responsibility. *Evolutionary purpose* refers to listening to, and following, the direction that an organization takes as an independent, living being. Teal organizations turn their attention from external survival to internal flourishing whilst individuals commit themselves to the evolutionary growth of the organization. An organization's primary goal is not to perform better and generate more

profits; instead, the organization seeks a purpose, meaning, and calling of their being in a larger community and society.

The Teal worldview emerges from the work of a number of authors and, particularly, from Ken Wilber.³ Wilber (2000) advances a series of ideas which he encapsulates in an “integral theory”, a systematic philosophy which suggests the synthesis of all human knowledge and experience. Laloux argues that this worldview opens new possibilities which can be represented by four key themes. Firstly, the world is a place for individual and collective unfolding, such that those who embrace a Teal perspective should let go of pre-conceived ideas of what they should be or what they should do. Secondly, the ego can be tamed, to the extent that setbacks and mistakes need not be met with fear, anger, or shame; instead, they are embraced as opportunities for learning and growth. Thirdly, by relinquishing the power of the ego, decisions can be made according to what is right for the individual (rather than what others think is right for the individual); this promotes inner rightness as a moral compass. Fourthly, the pain and emptiness of contemporary life can be transcended by a Teal perspective; yearning for wholeness becomes replaced by a deep realisation of interconnectedness with other people and with all forms of life and nature. This shift to Teal might have profound implications for how organizing is theorised and practiced; Laloux claims that the organizations that already run along Teal principles and practices prefigure an alterity which is already very different. The three organizational breakthroughs (self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose) confront mainstream organizational discourses and practices at a fundamental level, in how they handle organizational structures, people, and purpose, and nourish alternative discourses and practices by advancing new social relations.

1.2.3 Establishing research practice

Selecting #AlteritOrg as the research site makes a series of demands on research practice, particularly for a scholar inclined towards ethnographic methods. Organizational ethnography is underscored by the assumption that discourses and practices are situated within a social context and ‘cannot be properly understood outside the context in which they are situated’ (Bate, 1997, p. 1156). This assumption frames the ethnographic

³ Laloux (2014; 2016) explains that Wilber’s “Teal” or “evolutionary” worldview corresponds to Gebser’s “Integral”, Loevinger’s “Integrated”, Cook-Greuter’s “Construct-Aware”, Kegan’s “Inter-Individual”, Torbert’s “Strategist” and “Alchemist”, Graves’ “AN”, Spiral Dynamics’ “Yellow”, Maslow’s “Self-Actualisation”, Wade’s “Authentic”, and others. It is often referred to as “Integral”.

imperative of “being there” which, in turn, has implications for a researcher’s immersion in the field (Bourdieu, 1958; Malinowski, 1922) and accounts for the extensive attention given to the role of the researcher (Coffey, 1999; Van Maanen, 2011a). However, contemporary subjectivities of organizing reveal a pressing challenge for ethnographic researchers (Ybema, et al., 2018). As an online community, which draws members from around the world and is facilitated by communicative technologies, its fundamental characteristics clearly challenge traditional expectations of proximity in ethnographic research (Bengtsson, 2014). Yet, the appropriateness of ethnography methods for focusing on groups of people interacting over time, and of its associated methods for observing social discourses and practices, is well documented (e.g. Clifford and Marcus, 1986); and organizational ethnographies have long-facilitated the qualitative advance of organization theory by exploring discourses and practices situated within a social context of the formal organization and other specifically organizational settings (Ybema, et al., 2009). So, establishing a research practice which facilitates my engagement with #AlteritOrg and its members—participating, observing, and interviewing—needs special consideration.

Netnography (Kozinets, 2002, 2009, 2015, 2017) is selected as research design espousing a specific set of research practices related to data collection, analysis, research ethics, and representation, grounded in participant observation. It is often understood as a digital development of ethnography (Costello, et al., 2017; Kozinets and Nocker, 2018), and is similarly associated with a deep, longitudinal research which produces thick descriptions of cultures and groups (Geertz, 1973; Van Maanen, 2011b). Through a combination of archival and online communications work, participation and observation, digital and network data collection, analysis, and research representation (Kozinets, 2015) detailed understanding can be developed and presented. Critical analysis, in tandem with the evaluation of digitally originating data, offers the potential to contribute to knowledge of organizing for alterity from this study of #AlteritOrg. This research represents one of the first uses of netnography in an organizational studies context; and whilst its origins lie with Kozinets in digital marketing, its anthropological lineage positions it as ripe for development in the context of building knowledge about organizing for alterity in a technologically mediated context.

The thesis presents a rich body of empirical data of which there are four principal streams. (1) Archival data were captured and curated throughout the study. This stream amounts to more than 1,500 articles, blog posts, forum posts and comments, podcasts, text files,

images, AV presentations, and other digital artefacts from research site. (2) Participant-observation data were captured and curated through daily interaction with the community, amounting to more than 1,600 hours over 18 months. Included in this are text-based data, screengrabs of visual data, attending group events, joining webinars, participating in “community calls”, and other acts of connecting. (3) This research was further grounded in interview data with #AlteritOrg members communicating their experiences and expertise in their own words. In this stream, the research captures data from 42 semi-structured interviews, each approximately 90 minutes long, audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. (4) Informed by Czarniawska’s (2007) work on “diary studies”, from the start of the research I have written fieldnotes in a research diary, charting a journey through learning and discovery. Thus, my research practice is underscored by my commitments to researcher reflexivity. The fieldnotes provide opportunities to plan and review as the research develops and offer a personal and human filter to frame all other streams of data.

I kept a netnographic commitment to include hermeneutic interpenetration (Kozinets, 2015) but analysis was principally informed by Gioia, et al. (2013), who describe how theory development demands that research captures, conceptually, those human organizational experiences which can convince of adequacy. The data structure that will be presented at the end of the methodology chapter demonstrates how I have made that move from raw data to claims about organizing for alterity based in ‘grounded theorising’ (Holton, 2018). The research reveals specific dimensions of organizing for alterity which are common to #AlteritOrg. Analysis demonstrates that data reveals how these dimensions may be understood as interrelated principles and practices. Four principles (purpose, freedom and trust, collaboration, and transparency) and four practices (forming dynamic networks, carrying our role-based activity, undertaking localised decision-making, engaging in experimentation and adaptation). Detailed analysis of the data enables a compelling articulation of these principles and practices to be supported by rich and nuanced insight; this represents a deepened understanding of organizing for alterity, encountered as a set of complex and contested processes, underscored by complex and contested principles, and ultimately realising complex and contextual outcomes.

1.3 Articulating the question

In asking the question, “what does the data reveal?”, the thesis interrogates the organizational discourses and practices illuminated by its study of #AlteritOrg and offers a

critical analysis of organizing for alterity in this context. The thesis is concerned with building knowledge, on an empirical basis, about organizing for alterity. Specifically, it asks three broad questions:

- 1) what is the premise of #AlteritOrg;
- 2) what discourses and practices are constitutive of #AlteritOrg; and,
- 3) what are the future prospects of #AlteritOrg?

The thesis relies on the value inherent in “alterity” as a heuristic, and in the potential for work carried out in its name to reveal new insights and deepen understanding. In the following chapters, these three broad questions are informed by extant literature, theoretical commitments, and methodological design: the research aims and objectives, thus, are presented in full on page 74.

1.4 Mapping the voyage

The thesis consists of twelve chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the thesis proceeds to **Chapter 2** which sets out the theoretical proposition underpinning this thesis and makes the argument for adopting a critically performative stance (Spicer, et al. 2009, 2016); this leads on to **Chapter 3** which undertakes a review of the literature to locate the study within the wider body of the critical organizational studies tradition. **Chapter 4** is devoted to the research design and methodology. The data structure, the construction of which was informed by the work of Dennis Gioia, is presented on page 108. An **Entr’acte** serves as a short reflexive transition, marking the move from a period of “thinking about research” to a period of “doing research”. **Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9** present the empirical findings of the study, attending to the nature of discourse and the narrative flow of the research site (rather than a strict presentation of the data structure). A second **Entr’acte** serves as a short reflexive transition, marking the move from a period of “doing research” to a period of “evaluating research”. **Chapter 11** subjects empirical material to further interrogation and highlights the findings of the thesis—central to which is the presentation of eight qualitative markers of alterity, which are constructed from the study’s original empirical data. **Chapter 12** draws some conclusions from the study; it offers a final critical evaluation of #AlteritOrg and Teal Organizing before highlighting avenues for future research. Finally, an **Epilogue** begins with a short reflexive transition designed to extract

the researcher and the reader from the research setting. This enables reflection on the wider processes and outcomes of this research.

2. A theoretical proposition: planning the voyage

The introduction to this thesis offers several indicators that its ambition is to identify with a body of work that is more than simply small 'c' critical. Instinctively, it embraces a body of work which advances theoretically informed critiques of management and organization, originally grounded in critical theory, but then extended to incorporate post-structuralist writing, as catalysed by Alvesson and Willmott (1992a). In adopting this position, the thesis acknowledges the legacy of scientific management to organizational scholarship and the subsequent challenge made to this scholarship by a range of critiques on the grounds of its unsuitability for a changing world. The thesis harnesses a sustained interest in organizing as not just processual and heterogeneous, but political and contested. This extends consideration of the claim by Reedy, et al. (2016) that organizing in its traditional form is no longer fit for purpose. The thesis considers mainstream approaches to new organizational forms. However, to move beyond an instrumental reading of that discourse, towards an alterity of insight, critique, and transformative re-definition (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006), it takes up scholarship that extends critique of mainstream approaches to organizing onto more radical ground. This makes demands on the thesis' theoretical stance, and this chapter sets out the thesis' theoretical proposition before embarking on a review of extant literature.

The decision to embrace theoretically informed critiques of management and organization allows the empirical research which shapes (and is shaped by) this thesis to connect with those themes which motivate extant work on alternative organizing. Critical scholarship enjoys multiple thematic foci—these include (but are not limited to) structures of domination, the taken-for-granted, instrumentality, reflexivity, and power (Adler, et al., 2007). Typically, these themes emerge from critiques of bureaucracy and capitalism (Grey and Willmott, 2005; Smircich and Calás, 1995; Wood and Kelly, 1978), the labour process theory (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979), feminist organization studies (Ashcraft, 2009; Calás and Smircich, 1996), humanist approaches (Benson, 1977; Burrell and Morgan, 1979), and critical versions of postmodernism (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). These streams provide an important backdrop to this research, which seeks hermeneutic and archaeological insight (Deetz, 1973, 1982; Foucault, 1970; Giddens, 1979), deconstructed and genealogical critique (Culler, 1983; Foucault, 1980), and transformative re-definition characterised by concept formation, resistance, and conscientização (Foucault, 1980; Freire, 1968; Gadamer, 1975; Gergen, 1982; Giddens, 1979). Developing research along these lines offers an

opportunity to contribute theoretically to themes by challenging the naturalisation of organizing, rejecting its expressly performative outcomes, and engaging in sustained reflexive practice.

2.1 The possibilities of organizing for alterity

In setting out the thesis' theoretical proposition, this chapter details its response to critical performativity; in so doing, it engages with the debate begun by Spicer, et al. (2009) which agitates a research practice which aspires to be affirmative and pragmatic in its critical engagement with organizing. Organizing for alterity offers a series of possibilities; these possibilities emerge from rigorous study of, and extended engagement with, discourses and practices which have the potential to reveal new subjectivities.

Organizing for alterity might offer a challenge to the structures of domination which characterise society as capitalist, patriarchal, racist, imperialist, and productivist. Kostera (2014) laments how mystery has disappeared from society. She evidences this with discussion of "McDonaldisation" (Ritzer, 1996) and notes (after Martin, 2002) that all aspects of human activity are now subjected to measurement and counting. Ritzer (1996) coins the term, "McDonaldizers" to refer to those who, after Taylor (1911), look to increase efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control across modern society, and the extent to which abstract and impersonal standards have come to define how everything should be done. These claims are echoed in the critique of the depersonalized and alienating nature of work in organizations (Katz and Kahn, 1966), of the unequal life chances afforded to poor and working-class people, women, and minorities (Ehrenreich, 2001), and of marketisation as a mechanism of exploitation, domination, and rent extraction (Coff, 1999). Critiques of contemporary social relations (such as these) suggest that structures of domination not only cause human suffering but also threaten humanity itself (Bauman, 2000; Sennett, 2006). Organizing for alterity, as a means of becoming organizational structures, might therefore choose to assume a greater responsibility for its end/s.

Organizing for alterity might subvert the tendency for social relations—such as those between employers and employees, genders and sexualities, races and ethnicities—to become taken for granted or naturalized. Neo-institutional theory seeks to understand organizational behaviour as situated in and influenced by other organizations and wider social forces, especially broader cultural rules and beliefs (Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016; Scott, 2008). And, furthermore, much of the structure of the world we see around us represents

the taken-for-granted dominance of ideas about what things are supposed to look like, rather than any technical necessity. This emphasises the importance of organizing for alterity in theorising about the transformation of institutions, as well as reconciling the heterogeneity of actors and practices in organizing fields (Greenwood, et al., 2008).

Organizing for alterity might offer a fresh perspective on pervasive assumptions about the instrumentality of the value of social relations in the workplace. These assumptions are cast in different forms: sometimes explicit (Donaldson and Preston, 1995) and sometimes implicit (Walsh, 2005). The point is that critical research can identify the role of the broader structures which are constitutive and co-constitutive of organizing and afford greater attention to the underlying values of social relations (e.g., Adler, 2002; Knights and Willmott, 1986; Kochan, 2002). Walsh, et al., (2003) argue that this is important, since organizational scholarship has pursued society's economic objectives much more than it has its social ones.

Organizing for alterity might enhance Woolgar's (1998) foundational work on reflexivity, which has inspired qualitative researchers to self-reflect and self-refer. Reflexivity, in this context, means the capacity to recognise how accounts of alterity, whether made by researcher or practitioner, allow for greater focus on "self-knowledge and sensitivity" which, in turn, allow the researcher or practitioner to 'better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self-monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal' (Berger, 2015: 220).

Finally, organizing for alterity might connect with that theme of critical analyses which is concerned with showing that forms of knowledge, which appear to be neutral, reflect and reinforce asymmetrical relations of power. This connection between power and knowledge is inevitable when researchers take existing realities as necessary givens rather than as the product of continuing struggles, or when they see their roles as servants of power (Baritz, 1974; Brief, 2000). A Foucauldian perspective on power demands a consideration which transcends the struggle between groups who have more or less of it. For Foucault, as for Gramsci, power is much more pervasive; it may be positive as well as a negative force. Power may enable certain potentialities to become actualities.

2.2 Established critical commitments

The foci of established critical commitments are accompanied by a corresponding theoretical plurality. This plurality implies that there is no singular critical position, nor are there easy ways to distinguish between the critical and the non-critical. And it suggests that the moniker of critical is something to be agreed upon between the author and their audience; this agreement being negotiated, in no small part, by the work referenced, the theoretical resources relied upon, and the political ambition of the critique. Three overarching commitments serve to unite this body of theoretical resources, and their adoption by the researcher signals a critical sensitivity. Denaturalisation, anti-performativity, and reflexivity are commonly held as commitments which distinguish critical research from functionalist research (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Grey and Willmott, 2005); they frame some broad disciplinary boundaries within which each study can negotiate its own position. Ultimately, the arguments of anti-performativity give way to an advocacy of critical performativity, which seeks to deliver a profoundly performative project. For critical organizational studies, a central focus should be on those active and pragmatic interventions that can encourage a more progressive stance towards organizing. Still, the critical commitments identified by Fournier and Grey (2000) remain of central importance. They are representative of a rich body of work which has challenged the orthodox reading of organizing as instrumental and opened possibilities to build knowledge around the contradictory social processes of organizing (Benson, 1977), the 'darker' side of organizing (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980), and the resistance of workers to managers and organizing strategies (Wood and Kelly, 1978).

2.2.1 Denaturalisation

This study of organizing for alterity challenges the tendency for organizing practices to become taken for granted, or naturalised. Any commitment to denaturalisation is subject to shifts and revisions, theoretical plurality, and the changing nature of organizing. This means that any process of denaturalisation needs first to identify, and then to follow the organizing practices that will become its target, before drawing on theoretical resources which best help mount a challenge to them (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006). The challenge is taken up by this study and focuses on deconstructing the reality of organizing and the truthfulness of its discourses and practices, with a view to exposing its unnaturalness and irrationality. Its intent is not to legitimise (any version of) alterity; nor to replace one set of assumptions about organizing with another. It affords equal critical scrutiny to alternative

discourses and practices of organizing within the research site as to conventional practices of organizing that provide its socio-cultural context. Alternative discourses and practices that themselves become naturalised also become the target of denaturalisation; challenging the emergence of socially structured silences that 'exhaust the space of possible discourse' (Power, et al., 2003: 148). Alvesson and Wilmott (1992a) advocate denaturalisation as a counteracting force to discursive closure. Discursive closure relates to the challenges of objectivism and power, whereby the taken-for-granted assumptions associated with the dominant mode of ideological rationality freezes the social order. This study turns to a variety of theoretical stimuli to rattle the ideological cage of alterity.

This study addresses its commitment to denaturalisation through the collection of extensive empirical material. And, through sustained researcher reflexivity, it pursues a polyvocal telling of the research site. By seeking multiple perspectives and adopting multiple data collection methods it constructs a noisy space of its own, attempting to disrupt any silences, with the aim of listening intently to those who are engaged in organizing for alterity. It challenges taken-for-granted assumptions by drawing on different theoretical stimuli in combination and permutation. These processes, which lead to the articulation of a data structure, and the subsequent proposal of eight qualitative markers of alterity.

2.2.2 Anti-performativity

Performativity—in the sense of building knowledge that is in some way beneficial to boosting an organization's performance—has not been a dominant characteristic of critical work, even though pockets of critical management scholarship clearly harbour ambition to directly emancipate or empower. Conceptual markers often signal researcher intent: 'power, control and inequality typically betoken some form of critical approach whilst efficiency, effectiveness and profitability do not' (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 17).

Performativity would be firmly located within the latter group of conceptual markers, and the anti-performative stance generally taken by critical scholarship refuses to 'develop and celebrate knowledge which contributes to the production of maximum output for minimum input' (Fournier and Grey, 2000: 17) since this legitimises unsatisfactory articulations of means-ends organizing (Grey and Willmott, 2005). Across different disciplines, a range of treatments have sought to conceptualise performativity: it is employed conceptually as relating to doing things with words (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), as efficiency (Lyotard, 1984), as actors constituting the self (Butler, 1990; Derrida, 1979), as

bringing theory into being (Barnes, 1983; Callon, 1990; Pickering, 1995), and as the importance of socio-materiality (Latour, 2005). Different conceptualisations have been adopted by different organizational scholars, but Gond, et al. (2015) note three broad streams which emerge from re-appropriations of performativity: these relate to (1) the constitutive role of communication in organizations (Ashcraft, et al., 2009; Taylor, 1993; Taylor and Van Every, 2000); (2) organizational routines (Feldman, 2000; Feldman and Pentland, 2003); and, (3) the championing of critical theory (Spicer, et al., 2009). Gond, et al. (2015) along with other scholars make a series of claims about the “improper” use of performativity (e.g. Cabantous, et al., 2016; Fleming and Banerjee, 2016); they take aim at the conflation of multiple distinct views (that are not always made explicit) and the neglect of important dimensions of its foundational scholars’ work.

Aligning myself with the stream of work which seeks to accommodate an extended engagement with organizations, allowing myself to remain open to the possibility of expressly performative outcomes, this study draws on Parker and Parker (2017) and Parker, et al. (2014: 241) who agitate for the development of a body of empirical knowledge relating to alternative organizational forms claiming it could ‘re-imagine future social arrangements’.

2.2.3 Reflexivity

Critical research requires engagement in a perpetual critique which is legitimised by a turning back of the critique onto itself (Deetz and Mumby, 1990). A broad “reflexive turn” (Weick, 1999) has led to interest in how reflexivity is defined and employed (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2008; Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999; Gergen and Gergen, 1991; Woolgar, 1998). Reflexivity is central to the critical tradition, as it gives attention to ‘the processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer’ (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009: 8). Berger (2015: 221) highlights that ‘[r]eflexivity is crucial throughout all phases of the research process, including the formulation of a research question, collection and analysis of data, and drawing conclusions.’ This is especially important to the critically oriented researcher, who seeks to emphasise how research processes shape research outcomes (Hardy, et al., 2001) and to expose the intersubjective relationships that exist between the researcher and the researched (Archer, 2009). A habitual process of reflexivity reveals much more than purely instrumental action; it is a critical commitment to reflexivity that allows the research to subtly negotiate its political context (Heritage, 1984) and opens

each interaction between the researcher and the researcher as an entry point to multiple complexities (Forester, 1992; Knorr-Cetina, 1981). Specific attention has been due to the online nature of the research, in which context reflexivity requires some refinement (Boellerstorff, et al., 2012; Hine, 2000; Horst and Miller, 2013; Kozinets, 2015; Rogers, 2009, 2013; Underberg and Zorn, 2013). The context of this thesis challenges reflexive practice in terms of its conceptual and methodological understanding of data, because (for many qualitative research traditions) digital data lacks ‘traditional markers of quality and an underlying interpretative apparatus’ (Rogers, 2013: 203). These challenges have been approached through a critical ethnographic commitment to reflexivity (Forester, 1992), but enhances the notion of “paying attention” by redoubling the practice—in effect, by “paying attention to attention” (Citton, 2014). This enables greater confidence in a re-evaluation of the intersubjective relationships that frame data production and (re-)presentation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) in the context of netnographic inquiry.

The adaptation of reflexivity for an online context is central to attending to the ontological, epistemological, and axiological challenges of digital data. In this thesis, two entr’actes are dedicated to reflection. Their placing in the thesis marks the transition between the ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ of research and, subsequently, the ‘doing’ and ‘evaluating’ (Day, 2012). Distinct from reflection, reflexivity commits to ‘exposing or questioning our ways of doing’ (Hibbert, et al., 2010: 48), and these entr’actes allude to conversations of philosophical and methodological reflexivity as explicit markers of research carried out in the critical tradition, and in establishing a clear distance from the unquestioned and unquestioning assumptions of positivism. They are acts of post-facto reflexivity, drawing on materials concurrent with the research, explicitly recognising the ongoing process of paying attention to attention.

2.3 Critical Performativity

Scholars have long been engaged in discussion about the purpose of critique and the possibility of engagement with organizations (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992a; Clegg, et al., 2006b; Grice and Humphreys, 1997; Wray-Bliss, 2003). This discussion is highly relevant to the theoretical position taken by this thesis: I am participant-observer in a qualitative study which demands I reconcile the level of my performative engagement with the critical commitments I espouse. Knudsen (2017: 9) notes that ‘social scientific traditions with a critical self-description have a dual desire in that they want to encompass science (theory) and more than science (practice)’. The difficulties in bridging the gap between theory and

practice are recognised by advocates and opponents of critical management studies (Clegg, et al., 2006b; King, 2015; Voronov, 2008), yet the desirability of engagement, influence, and practical relevance (Hjorth and Reay, 2017) is clearly recognised by way of a performative turn in critically-oriented research (Gond and Cabantous, 2015). The proposal made by Spicer, et al. (2009), to rethink performativity, identifies four problems with the more customary anti-performative stance taken up by critical scholarship: (1) it conflicts with attempts to promote social change; (2) its negative position precludes any claims about what it actually wants; (3) it creates cynicism by critiquing organizational life yet remaining dependent on it; and (4) it benefits from the performative environment in which research is carried out yet dedicates itself to attacking the very principles upon which it relies (Collinson, 1994).

Performativity has inflected various disciplines within social science research: Butler (1990) writing on gender studies; Callon (2007, 2010) and Mackenzie, et al. (2007) writing on economic sociology; Guérard, et al. (2013) employing notions of performativity within the field of strategy; and, more broadly, organizational theorising taken up by Gond, et al. (2015). As such, performativity has become synonymous with the study of “effect” liberated from the traditional approach of “causality” (Butler, 2010). Spicer, et al. (2009: 538) argue that the purpose of critical performativity is for ‘active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices.’ This positioning is supported by Wickert and Schaefer (2015) who promote specific micro-emancipations as prompts for reflexivity, and Koss Hartmann (2014) who argues for a “subversive” engagement with functionalism. Empirical work has developed critical performativity (King, 2015; Leca, et al., 2014; Roscoe and Chillas, 2014) alongside theoretical critique, undertaken by Cabantous, et al. (2016), Gond, et al. (2015), and Fleming and Banerjee (2016).

The conclusion I reach, in regard of the performativity debate, is that the identification of “critical performativity” is, like most choices, profoundly political. Spicer, et al. (2009: 554) claim that performativity is not as bad as some might choose to argue: ‘[t]he problem is to carefully decide what kind of performativity we want.’ The forging of relationships outside of the corporate environment might be identified as performative; and this has seen work with activists (Willmott, 2008), trades unions and women’s groups (Fournier and Grey, 2000), marginalised groups (Adler, 2002; Adler, et al, 2007), sweatshop workers (Boje, 1998) and students (Grey, 2007). The deeper resonance with organizing for alterity is further extended to empirical work with social and environmental activists, community

activism, new social movements, and the alt-globalisation movement (Reedy, et al., 2016; Fournier, 2006; Parker, et al., 2007; Reedy and Learmonth, 2009; Maeckelbergh, 2009). Through these performative engagements, ‘critical scholars are encouraged not only to understand practice, but importantly, to work toward changing it’ (Reedy and King, 2017: 1). So, in addressing dominant discourses (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012) and practitioner awareness (Wickert and Schaefer, 2015), and by offering practical guidelines for organizations (King and Learmonth, 2015), performativity may be necessary to reshape research as a route to transformative change (Kieser and Leiner, 2012) in line with the researcher’s own political choices and best value judgements.

2.4 Activism, engagement, and social change

The tradition of academic activism (as defined by Flood, et al., 2013) is neither new nor entirely dissimilar from the intentions of research framed by critical performativity. In negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, academic activism addresses that persistent claim that critical researchers ‘fiddled with footnotes’ whilst the ‘global economy crumbled’ (Spicer, et al., 2016: 243). By embracing the elements of activism (Flood, et al., 2013), scholars might build knowledge to inform social change, participate in those sites of social change, commit to progressive strategies of teaching and learning, and positively impact the academic community. I believe it is helpful to briefly locate these conceptions of activism, engagement, and social change within the theoretical resources oft drawn upon by critical researchers and to link this to the rationale for exploring organizing for alterity.

Pierre Bourdieu (in particular) had high regard for the role of the “public intellectual” which places academic expertise at the disposal of social movements (Spicer, et al. 2009) and other engagements within the field of research. Bourdieu (1982: 656) recognizes that the intellectual has dual and duelling agenda: ‘[t]o be entitled to the name of intellectual, a cultural producer must fulfil two conditions: on the one hand, he [sic.] must belong to an autonomous intellectual world (a field) . . . ; on the other hand, he must invest the competence and authority he has acquired in the intellectual field in a political action, which is in any case carried out outside the intellectual field proper’. Yet, he appears to advocate only one kind of political action: ‘the first objective of intellectuals should be to work collectively in defense of their specific interests and of the means necessary for protecting their own autonomy’ (1991: 660). The arguments that pervade much of the critical performativity discourse are further rehearsed by Bourdieu (1982: 660–661):

[t]hrough the effect of a kind of guilty conscience, which has often led them to become “fellow travellers”, not, as they supposed, of the proletariat, but of second intellectuals who have claimed to speak on behalf of the proletariat, intellectuals have often given priority to the defense of great universal causes and refused, as corporatists, to defend their own interests, forgetting that one defends the universal by defending the defenders of the universal.

Other readings of being a “public intellectual” offer further rationale for constructing a bridge between theory and practice. According to Bérubé (1994: 176): ‘the future of our ability to produce new knowledges for and about ordinary people—and the availability of education to ordinary people—may well depend on how effectively we can . . . make our work intelligible to nonacademics’. Bourdieu and Bérubé are amongst those who advocate an implied goal of impacting policy and decision-making, which they address through their offering of expert knowledge to the unenlightened. By passing over the study of performativity, in favour of study that is performative (Knudsen, 2017) scholars create knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves.

Bourdieu’s writing on resistance intersects with wider notions of social change. Indeed, the value of his sociology is that it makes it possible to draw attention to the specific possibilities, preconditions, and restrictions concerning all efforts of influential resistance, collective action, and social movements (Husu, 2013). Consequently, Bourdieu is useful in exploring organizing for alterity because he does not provide an easy escape from the disciplining effects of power or the possibilities for change. And, whilst he may be more convincing in explaining social reproduction rather than change, this does not mean that he is incapable of contributing to the richer and nuanced perspective of our understanding of social change and social movements. In taking up two themes, the threat of the demise of culture and the danger of neo-liberal economics (Schinkel, 2003), Bourdieu establishes a connection with previous descriptions of the *zweckrational* and the *wertrational*. He regards the demise of culture as a suppression of value-oriented rationality (in danger of becoming overgrown by, or dependent on, an economic market) and the inexorable rise of neo-liberal economics as an unhealthy privileging of technocratic-oriented rationality (emphasizing the self-regulative power of the market without governmental oversight). The recurrent argument in favour of neoliberal economics is one of greater choice. It was prescient, it could be argued, that Bourdieu foresaw a future of cultural censorship by the market, and a hollowing out of cultural creativity. His argument, stated earlier, that ‘intellectuals should . . . work collectively in defense of specific interests and of the means necessary for protecting their own autonomy’ (1991: 660) is a startling pre-echo of current

conditions in which intellectual institutions are eroding under a set of pressures, of which the dominant characteristic is surely the constraints imposed by the neoliberal market.

The legacy of Bourdieu is not without its awkward corners. In the distinction made by Latour (1996: 199), Bourdieu would be grouped with “classical sociology” rather than “relativist sociology”. According to Latour’s descriptor, ‘[c]lassical sociology knows more than the “actors”; it sees right through them to the social structure or the destiny of which they are the patients’. This sociological perspective embraces a “metalanguage” which penetrates reality to see what really goes on (Schinkel, 2003); and this is in evidence in Bourdieu’s analyses (with *doxa* and *habitus* employed as core-concepts) which align with the Latour’s observations on “classical sociology” and risks the perception of arrogance. This perception is borne out in the question of who knows best: does the researcher know anything more than the non-researcher in the analysis of the social? Geertz (1973: 23) describes ethnographic findings as ‘particular’, rather than ‘privileged’. He argues that ‘[t]o regard them as anything more (or anything less) than that distorts both them and their implications . . . for social theory’. Still, Bourdieu appears to conceptualise his findings as “privileged” and this challenges the extent to which a Bourdieu-inspired performance of an act of resistance may be appropriate to those claiming to create knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves. Yet, as expounded by Reedy and Learmonth (2009: 256) ‘critical intellectuals within the academy are in a unique position to counter the status quo because they possess the theoretical and pedagogical tools, as well as a degree of cultural capital, that can contest the monolithic nature of the corporate consensus’. Socially structured silences give the dominant discourse its strength; as such, they are worthy of challenge by the academy, otherwise, ‘there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, that there is no alternative’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 29).⁴

2.5 Implications for empirical research

The implications of critical performativity on methodological choices provide distinct opportunities for qualitative research. If a methodology is to be successful in its negotiation of a set of epistemological presuppositions, ontological entailments, and implications for learning, knowing, and making claims (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006) then establishing

⁴ It befits mention that Bourdieu would need to re-evaluate his claims about opposition to the neoliberal view in the context of today’s society and the widespread increase of discourses of discontent in certain sections of the media.

the political intent of the research paradigm signals to the reader the expectations of the researcher and the means by which the researched have been engaged. At the heart of Fleming and Banerjee's (2016) reservations about critical performativity is the question of the subject of the critique. Contrary to Spicer, et al. (2009), who might happily identify managers as agents of change, Fleming and Banerjee identify a wider range of audiences for their research, including public forums, like social and environmental activists, the unemployed workforce, and union officials. Identifying the audience helps establish an important distinction between critique which identifies the subject and the object of the critique and critique that criticizes something in order to produce knowledge for someone else (Knudsen, 2017). Fleming and Banerjee (2016) recognise knowledge as a political tool, the type that might be considered useful in academic activism, whilst Spicer, et al. (2009) might prefer to identify the production of knowledge as contingent, of beneficial use to the individual who wishes to change themselves. The production of knowledge as contingent demonstrates naturalised actions, behaviours, systems, and structures, and may offer suggestions by which the system can transgress itself.

In their seminal article, Spicer, et al. (2009) suggest that critical research can embrace performativity in five ways, as contextually appropriate. Firstly, they claim, '[c]ritique involves an affirmative stance' (Spicer, et al. 2009: 545), and by adopting a methodological approach which draws on ambiguous metaphors, it may be possible to find points of revision where organizational discourse can be updated (Alvesson, 2008). Secondly, research adopting a critical performative approach involves 'asking practical questions which care for participants' views at the same time as seeking to challenge the same participants' (Spicer, et al. 2009: 546). This is a difficult balance to strike; it involves caring for and challenge participants to their cumulative benefit (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Thirdly, critically performative research might reject presentations of powerful systems as totally integrated, all powerful, singular entities (Latour, 2005), recognising them 'as a complex of different institutions and a plurality of actors and interests with different logics that are constantly pulling themselves apart' (Spicer, et al. 2009: 550). This might be achieved by pragmatizing Habermas's (1984) ideas about communicative action: 'putting ideal speech aside [in favour of] the actual social and political conditions of "checking", of political voice, and thus too of possible autonomy' (Forester, 1993: 3). Fourthly, engaging with potentialities, rather than actualities, would help to move beyond the isolated critique of management practice to a sense of what might be possible. Ybema (2004) suggests a focus on the "future perfect", whilst heterotopian discourses enlivens streams of research

concerned with the small, incremental changes of tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson and Scully, 1995). That sense of possibility is more ambitiously captured by Bloch (1954, 1955, 1959), who writes about the concrete possibility generated by each successive age, which enables the subjective hope that which is deemed to be absent – from simple daydreams to complex visions of perfection—to actively develop the world. Finally, and emerging in part from the work by Meyerson, the authors identify the importance of micro-emancipations to suggest what is regarded as “good”, rather than a reliance on an articulation of simply what is “bad”. Revealing the political basis for gestures towards the ideal is not to engage in normative prescription, but to engage with the practical implications of a critically inflected ethics. Rather than attacking from the outside, research may influence from the inside (Spicer, et al., 2016). This necessitates an ethic of care, or a “loving struggle” (Jaspers, 1932) characterised by mutual critique and mutual support, where all kinds of power and superiority, prejudice, and calculating strategic reserve against the other are eliminated.

In their later writing, Spicer, et al. (2016) consider afresh the implications for empirical research. This work gestures towards four components tied up in the implications of critical performativity for empirical research. Firstly, they ask, what issue do you want to speak about? The authors point to Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), who claim a little novelty is required to mark out a novel contribution, too much is usually punished. Research should consider the extent of public interest in the issue and give thought to ‘whether there is scope to pose the question in a way that challenges underlying assumptions in a meaningful way’ (Spicer, et al. 2016, 235). Secondly, they inquire, how do you wish to speak about this issue? The authors identify three dialectical tensions: care and circumspection, pragmatism and progressivism, potentials and the present. They claim: ‘this means being alive to the tensions that are specific to one’s own research field . . . not trying to resolve such tensions, but to use them as a springboard for novel ideas’ (Spicer, et al., 2016: 237). Thirdly, they challenge, what is the context from which you speak? The authors argue, ‘[i]n most cases empirical realities do not support intellectualism’ (Spicer, et al., 2016: 238), and despite being an intellectual discipline, research needs to achieve ‘some collective bite’ (Spicer, et al., 2016: 238) in its engagement with participants and wider audiences. This requires engaging disgruntled elites, mobilising resources (including structures of micro-mobilisation), and achieving a degree of resonance: only then can critical inquiry become performative. Fourthly, they demand, what effect might your critique advance? The authors envision: ‘a negative outcome that involves the removal of

harmful aspects . . . a positive outcome that involves the articulation of alternative interests; and a dialogical outcome that involves deliberation about existing aspects and potential future aspects' (Spicer, et al., 2016: 240). They laud these four components as co-constitutive of worthwhile aims, and I have integrated them into my patterns of reflexivity throughout this thesis.

The response I construct to critical performativity presents a series of opportunities for this research. In successive responses to a performativity "crisis", empirical research has sought 'an engaged critique without losing a critical sensitivity' (Parker and Parker, 2017: 1367). This is contested, amidst claims that it encourages a blunting of critical apparatus through an "accommodation" of the status quo and, worse still, a loss of "antagonism" towards managers and managerialism. Yet, different approaches suggest how critical understanding can be deepened in the performative process (e.g. Koss Hartmann, 2014; Spicer, et al., 2009, 2016). Careful consideration of the relationship with research from non-critical traditions, the use of critical tools, and the nuanced use of critical lenses prompts deep thought about how this thesis might engage with organizing for alterity: as such, I have engaged with literature from critical and non-critical traditions, and negotiated conflicting ontological and epistemological commitments. I have chosen to be present in this research and make an explicit commitment to participate as well as observe; this research identifies performativity as implicit within the expectations of participant-observation as constitutive of the wider ethnographic tradition. To uphold a commitment to anti-performativity would require a step back from, or a deliberate obfuscation of, the participation element of participant-observation. This would require a different research strategy, deliver a different set of research outcomes, and would probably need to be carried out by a researcher with different interests.

3. A literature review: the lands we know

Organizational theory has been served by a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, social psychology, anthropology, and political science. As a result, organizing has benefited from different theoretical treatments, though the sub-discipline that is constructed around organizations, management, and (more crudely) business has tended to be drawn towards those treatments which advance knowledge about a unitary perspective of the world. Numerous scholars have adopted and adapted theoretical treatments in support of a managerial perspective of the formal organization (e.g. Handy, 2007; Kotter and Rathgeber, 2016) and some have developed a specifically processual understanding of organizing (e.g. Mintzberg, 2007; Weick, 1969). Fewer in number are those that have developed meaningful critiques (e.g. Alvesson and Wilmott, 1992a; Graeber, 2018; Harding, 2003; Kostera, 2014; Parker, 2002a). These critiques are supplemented by scholarship revealing the weighty tone of revisionism that shapes popular understanding of organizing (e.g. Cummings, et al., 2017; Du Gay, 2000; Peltonen, et al., 2018) which indicates the extent to which both organizational theory and organizational historiography is deserving of further scholarly attention.

This chapter is designed to help locate the reader within a body of knowledge pertaining to “organizing for alterity”. It establishes organizing for alterity as a conception distinct from mainstream organizing and aligns organizing for alterity with that body of work which attends to the possibility inherent in alternative approaches to organizing. It does this within the broader context of a critical organizational studies. Organizing, for Fayol (1916), is concerned with building up necessary structures, resources, and people; for him, organizing is a core managerial activity which helps meet the needs of the organization and deliver its aims. His work is not unusual and is representative of a grand tradition of organization as modernist enterprise (Brecht, 1965; Follet, 1926; Urwick, 1947; Weber, 1905, 1920). This tradition motivates scholars to extend, develop, and advance related ideas to build theories of organizing. The legacy of this scholarship remains central to our experience of the world today, through discourses and practices of organizing which are continually (re)produced in the societies in which we live and the institutions in which we work.

3.1 A conceptual frame for organizing for alterity

We live surrounded by possibility, not merely by presence. In the prison of mere presence, we could not even move nor even breathe.

Ernst Bloch, 1968: 281

Underscoring this chapter is the notion of possibility and I draw on this to develop a conception of organizing for alterity. Alterity is the state or quality of otherness that is opposite to, distinct from, or inassimilable by the self: the obverse to identity or sameness. As such, alterity defies simple definition—because any attempt to define it must draw on concepts like otherness, and difference, which are equally problematic. Indeed, any attempt to define alterity encounters the challenge of its innate characteristics: a lack of objective fixity, the connotation of being categorically different from the self, and the significance of designating that which necessarily evades full comprehension, definite knowledge, or material possession. In practical terms, whilst alterity demarcates the limits of self and knowledge, allusions to alterity do not necessarily offer any greater understanding or illumination of that which is “other.” To conceptualise alterity as otherness, is to capture the quality of the other that escapes the self’s comprehension, resists possession by the self, refuses to be subsumed into pre-existing categories of knowledge or consciousness, and is not merely the complementary opposite of a total system with the self.

In the context of organizational scholarship, Czarniawska (2008a: 8) identifies alterity as an ‘oppositional twin term’ of identity, which signifies ‘a relationship of difference: from oneself at another time, from something else, or from somebody else’. Langley (2018: 18) firmly refutes any suggestion that alterity is an abstract concept: ‘we do not live our lives in isolation but in relation to “others,” particular people, generalized others, language systems, narratives of culture and history’. She notes how the philosophers Ricœur and Lévinas find common ground in the philosophy of alterity—a conception they regard as usefully disrupting ‘the conventional Western philosophical discourse which privileges unity and sameness over alterity and difference’ (Dahl, 2001: 28–29).⁵ Lévinas (1998) remarks that we encounter alterity as we would encounter a “stranger”—with strangeness itself bearing no common or comparable “genus” or category. The conceptual value of alterity is further revealed in its earlier use by Gadamer (1960), and in the acrimonious debate

⁵ Cited in Cunliffe (2018) in her paper on alterity and the passion, politics, and ethics of self and scholarship.

between Foucault and Derrida of the 1960s and 1970s, whose works demonstrate the term's firm acceptance into philosophical discourse. Castoriadis (1975: 184) lauded the 'radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty' of alterity; Baudrillard (1981) feared the loss of alterity would deprive the world of the possibility of its rebuttal of arrogant, insular cultural narcissism (Baudrillard and Guillaume, 2008). And, in her theory of alterity, Spivak (1988, 1989) identifies the potency of alterity in challenging orthodoxy.

Conscious of the prevailing discourses of alterity, the thesis advances a conception of "organizing for alterity" which serves to challenge the orthodoxy of mainstream approaches to organizing and offers a rudimentary distinction between mainstream and alternative approaches. In the thesis, I try to avoid the temptation to assign alterity to someone or something, understanding that to do so, paradoxically, undermines alterity by making it into a knowable theme or entity. Furthermore, I am wary of those who might make claims of already embodying an otherness, when really to do so is inaccessible by virtue of the innate characteristics of alterity. That said, this chapter evaluates the assumptions inherent in mainstream discourses and practices of organizing; and, it argues that these mainstream discourses and practices reflect 'the normative western values of competitive individualism' (Reedy and Learmonth, 2009: 242) and 'bygone features of economic production' (Walsh, et al., 2006: 661) to the exclusion of any sense of alternative values, purposes, or ethics. It argues in favour of the pregnant possibility of the alterity that is inherent in alternative discourses and practices of organizing.

The possibility of the alternative is a central idea in Bloch's (1918) work, one that renders his writing on utopias distinctly meaningful to this thesis. Bloch regarded the universe as unfinished; in need of completion. For him, the future was unknown—it was simultaneously Not-Yet-Conscious and Not-Yet-Become—and yet could become known in the hearts, minds, and hands of an active humanity at the front line of aesthetic radicalism (Geoghegan, 1996). Bloch's vision represents a tension between the desirable and the possible—and, to advance his argument, he continually developed concepts to express both the highest expectations and to register the inevitable drag of reality (Daniel and Moylan, 1997). Jameson (1971: 159) claimed, of Bloch's system, that it 'lies before us, enigmatic and enormous, like an aerolite fallen from space, covered with mysterious hieroglyphs [. . .] patiently waiting for [. . .] decipherment'.

It is through the possibility of mysterious hieroglyphs, their presence suggested by Bloch's ontology of Not-Yet-Being, that I conceive of the alterity inherent in the alternative; a

phenomenon not fully able to be articulated, and with a fundamental element of indeterminacy which allows for development, novelty, invention, and genuinely different outcomes.

Organizing for alterity steps away from those mainstream discourses and practices which have emerged from the grand tradition of modernist enterprise; instead, it steps towards something—following Bloch—that is, quite possibly, Not-Yet-Conscious and Not-Yet-Become.

3.1.2 Fitness for purpose

The conception of organizing for alterity picks up on the claim by Reedy, et al. (2016) that organizing in its traditional form is no longer fit for purpose. Their claim moves organizational scholarship onto more critical ground. It extends the work of those who already note the redundancy of current knowledge of organizing (Dunbar and Starbuck, 2006; Marsh, 2013; Miles and Snow, 1984; Schoonhoven, et al., 2005) and calls for the development of new theories to replace those which ‘are inextricably rooted in bygone features of economic production’ (Walsh, et al., 2006: 661) and ‘the normative western values of competitive individualism’ (Reedy and Learmonth, 2009: 242). Reedy, et al. (2016) advance their claim, further arguing that alternative forms of organizing are deserving of further study. Their claim has some historical precedence. Daft and Lewin (1990: 1) express regret at how new forms of organizing ‘seem far removed from academic research’. Other scholars (Greenwood and Miller, 2010; Miller, et al., 2009) call for greater imagination in theories of organizing, in the hope that theories will better respond to the novelty and diversity of contemporary organizing. Looking beyond current subjectivities, Puranam, et al. (2014: 163) argue, ‘perhaps what we should aim for are general theories of organizing that explain and indeed predict the emergence of new forms, rather than remain specifically tied to current contexts.’ And, through her work teaching organizational difference, Fournier (2006: 295) recognises that though ‘there is a long tradition of “critique” in organization studies . . . there are few attempts to radically shift the terms in which organizing is imagined’.

The question of how organizing is imagined chimes with Bloch's ontology of the Not-Yet-Being. His fascination with the *novum*⁶ leads him to continually refine ideas about how the Not-Yet-Conscious could become a creative force in the world. In what terms could we think about organizing? And, what could organizing become? From a Blochian perspective, these questions, whereby the Not-Yet-Conscious might become a creative force in the world, are addressed in a three-staged process: incubation, inspiration, and explication.⁷ By engaging with this process, the possibility exists for empirical work to immerse the researcher in the *novum* of new material in the field of alternative organizing, to encourage the researcher to seek out and evaluate moments of inspiration, and to enable the researcher to theorise about how such *novum* might become realised in practice. In the light of persistent claims about the fitness for purpose of theories of organizing, scholars call for empirical work in alternative settings (King, 2015; King and Learmonth, 2015; Parker and Parker, 2017). This call legitimates extended critique of mainstream approaches to organizing alongside work to stimulate the *novum*—new empirical material, and new theorising about organizing for current (and future) socio-economic and cultural contexts.

The chapter proceeds to consider that stream of literature pertaining to mainstream discourses and practices of organizing. It acknowledges the underlying commitments of this perspective to rationality and managerial hierarchy. And, it laments a residual attachment to that interpretation of Weber's work that upholds the possibility of an ideal type of organization.⁸ Following Wilmott (2011: 287), I note that Weber himself regards formal rationality as Janus-faced; 'harnessed to capitalist expansion [applications of formal rationality] tend to foster an "ethic of judgement" which impedes the collective development of responsibility, dignity, and "personality"'. And so, in considering how mainstream approaches to organizing account for greater responsibility, dignity, and personality, the chapter now moves to interrogate extant scholarship and to illuminate the

⁶ Novum (or "newness") emerges with the confluence of subjective and objective conditions. The wishes and aspirations of humanity, its possibilities, can only be actualised if there is objective ground of intellectual, social, and economic development.

⁷ *Incubation*—a stage in which new material is developing, much of it beneath the surface of consciousness, until a point is reached when it bursts into the conscious world. *Inspiration*—a sudden, lucid moment; sheer euphoric power leading people to reach for its magical or divine origins. *Explication*—the realisation of inspiration, when the task of adequately representing and articulating the novum of the Not-Yet-Conscious, such that it re-enters the historical timetable as immanent potentiality. (Geoghegan, 1996)

⁸ For extended consideration of Weber's legacy to organization theory, I acknowledge the work of Cummings, et al. (2017).

success (or otherwise) of those adaptations to bureaucracy which seek to loosen the grip of formal rationality and, in so doing, reduce organizing's reliance on hierarchy.

3.2 Mainstream approaches to organizing

I think there are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is painfully being born. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself—while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble.

Vaclav Havel, 1994 [extract from a speech at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, PA]

The intellectual legacy of Weber's observations on bureaucracy dominates mainstream approaches to organizing (Cummings, et al., 2017). Weber's (1905, 1920) writings on economic life, the Protestant ethic, and the spirit of capitalism frame organizing as a normative, rational process, and organizations as the resultant, ontologically secure objects of study from which more knowledge about organizing may be derived. This manifests itself in a set of assumptions about organizing which continue to (re)produce dominant, ideological modes of rationality which, when enacted, reflect predictability by (re)producing accepted truths in pursuit of social order (Baunsgaard and Clegg, 2012). The resultant social order represents a rationalisation of the world in which organizing is a distinctly modernist endeavour. Organizations, per se, illustrate 'the form of our modern condition', though, interestingly, they are infrequently presented as 'opportune or benevolent', and rather more frequently as 'constraining and repressive' (Clegg, 1990: 2).

3.2.1 Underlying commitments

The intellectual legacy of mainstream approaches to bureaucracy upholds two principal commitments—rationality and hierarchy—which are used in representations of Weber's work that remain wedded to the possibility of an ideal type of organization. These representations, and the translations that have facilitated them, have been rebutted; indeed, scholars have repeatedly demonstrated how Weber has been misrepresented in organizational studies (e.g. Aldrich, 1979; Clegg, 1992; Cummings, et al., 2017), yet recent attention to organizational historiography emphasises the embeddedness of the perspective within organizational theory (e.g. Cummings, et al., 2017; Peltonen, et al., 2018).

3.2.1.1 Rationality

Rationality is a major theme in Weber's work and represents a core underlying commitment of mainstream approaches to organizing. Organizational scholars have undertaken a detailed re-examination of bureaucracy which has helped isolate the central role of rationality (Clegg, et al., 2006a; DuGay, 2000; Olsen, 2006). However, a further distinction is necessary—that between the *zweckrational* and the *wertrational*. The *zweckrational* represents action in which the means to attain a particular outcome are rationally chosen; in the context of organizing endeavour, this is an entirely technocratic pursuit, attending to specific processes of organizing. The *wertrational* represents a value-oriented rationality. It sits opposed to technocratic thinking, privileging an assessment of the means and end/s of organizing in terms of ultimate human values such as social justice, peace, and human happiness. In this form, rationality makes no demands on the processes of organizing. Instead, it pursues outcomes which might be underpinned by ethical, religious, philosophical, or even holistic values. Underpinning mainstream organizational theory, the role of rationality (and the corollary processes of rationalisation) represents an assumed dominance of *zweckrational* action over *wertrational*. Burns and Stalker's (1961) seminal study of organizations entering the Scottish Council's electronics scheme in the early 1950s serves as a useful starting point for considering a general shift towards an organizing no longer dominated by technocratic rationalism. Out of extensive empirical work (for the major part a series of interviews with individual organizational members) the authors' analysis of organizational-level outcomes of organizing notes that flatter and more fluid organizing structures exist; these they identify as "organic" structures, inspiring subsequent empirical and theoretical attention towards organizing structures that (re)produce different means and end/s through flexibility, rather than efficiency (e.g. Adler, 2001; Birkinshaw, et al., 2008; Foss, 2003; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994b; Volberda, 1996; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997).

3.2.1.2 Hierarchy

Alongside rationality, the role of hierarchy in shaping organizing and organizations should also be noted. Managerial hierarchy, a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'has proved remarkably resistant to change' (Lee and Edmondson, 2017: 36). The taken-for-granted norms and assumptions of managerial hierarchy have become reproduced in theories which reinforce it as the driver of efficient performance. Hierarchy has attracted many definitions and characterisations and is used in this thesis to represent an

organizational design which features multiple layers of authority and a single layer of ownership at the top of the resultant structure (Chandler, 1977). Managerial hierarchy still dominates mainstream approaches to organizing today (Gruenfeld and Tiedens, 2010; Pfeffer, 2013) and rests on two core principles. Firstly, a *hierarchy of authority*, in which individuals report to managers who have the authority to organize the allocation and performance of tasks. Secondly, a *hierarchy of accountability*, in which managers are held accountable for the work of those below them in the organizational hierarchy. These two core principles institute the centrality of the hierarchical relationship between manager and subordinate, captured in terms of the principle of the unity of command (Fayol, 1916), supervision of lower offices by higher ones (Weber, 1920), and obedience to superiors (Burns and Stalker, 1961). This relationship, however captured, legitimises the power of one over another, and minimises any recourse to challenge authority by any human being in a position of subordination. Foucault (1976: 93) argues that '[p]ower is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'; and that power 'produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1975: 194). The ubiquity of power that sustains hierarchy and the hierarchical relationship may neither be a conscious nor a strategic organizational choice; instead, it may be because power is simply present in every facet and moment of social relations. The power of the hierarchy, when extended conceptually across an organization, refers to a sense of formal authority captured in the phenomenon of the pyramid-shaped organization chart (Jaques, 1996), immortalised in the organigram (Mintzberg, 1979) and reinforced by a sense of informal authority represented by dominant/deferent behaviours and hierarchical speaking rules (Anderson, et al., 2012; Báles, et al., 1951; Detert and Edmondson, 2011).

The predominance of hierarchy within theories of organizing attracts the attention of scholars who, whilst working in a broadly functionalist paradigm, question its ubiquity. Lee and Edmondson (2017: 36) indicate how the resilience of hierarchy 'may be explained as much by belief in its effectiveness as by its actual effectiveness' and suggest a lack of perceived viable alternatives almost certainly contributes to its longevity. One persistent line of inquiry considers how managerial hierarchy functions well in stable conditions but less-so in more dynamic conditions (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Mintzberg, 1979). Another line of inquiry suggests that hierarchy is well-suited to organizing routine tasks but faces difficulties when presented with non-routine problems which cross functional boundaries

(Adler, 2001; Barley, 1996; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994a).⁹ It seems that hierarchy is at its most successful, owing to its top-to-bottom nature, when not needing to make rapid adjustment (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Hamel, 2007). Notwithstanding this, hierarchy relies on status differences between manager and subordinate, and reproduces an uneven social order which does not serve the interests of all humans and their development equally (Kegan, 1994; McGregor, 1960). Still, it is important to acknowledge the clarification hierarchy brings to roles and responsibilities, and thereby to the coordination of tasks across large organizations enabling predictability and efficiency. Indeed, it was on this basis of power of the hierarchy that the success of industrial revolution in the global north was founded (Landes, 1986; Perrow, 1972). Moreover, the evolution of managers as mechanisms for organizing the allocation and performance of tasks (Adler, 2001; Burns and Stalker, 1961) and of managerial authority for organizing the identification of goals and the resolution of conflict (Magee and Galinsky, 2008; Nickerson and Zenger, 2004; Simon, 1997; Williamson, 2000) brought a semblance of control to a rapidly-changing industrial landscape.

However, care is needed because the study of hierarchy is predominantly focused on organizations whilst I commit this thesis to a study of organizing. This thesis calls into question the fitness for purpose of *organizing* on account of the structures it (re)produces and the nature of relationships contained therein. Weick (1969) repeats that well-rehearsed claim that organizations and organizing are not the same thing, highlighting that persistent limitation of extant knowledge about organizing: that being, that organizations, not the processes of organizing, dominate the scholarship of organizational studies (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011). Despite this well-rehearsed claim, our knowledge of organizing is still subaltern to that of organizations. Extant knowledge about organizing radiates from knowledge about organizations and the managerial ideology that promotes them, rather than the processes that are constituted by them and are constitutive of them. To advance organizing for alterity, this chapter draws on more avowedly critical sources which share in an identification of organizations as, first and foremost, a collection of human beings (Selznick, 1957). In so doing, it signals its critical ambition to approach organizing as a collective development of responsibility, dignity, and personality (Willmott, 2011) rather

⁹ These perspectives are extensively developed in literature emerging from complexity theory and systems theory (Parsons, 1937; Senge, 1990) which sit outside of the scope of this thesis.

than in mainstream (and expressly instrumental) terms of building up necessary structures, resources, and people.

3.2.2 A hybridisation of bureaucracy

Within mainstream approaches to organizing, scholars lean towards advancing a hybridisation of bureaucracy rather than a wholesale rejection of its discourses and practices. Courpasson and Reed (2004: 6) warn that this is a narrative which might be more properly located within the discourse of endings associated with iconoclastic writing. They argue:

The putative 'demise of bureaucracy', as well as the phoenix-like emergence of the 'post-bureaucratic or network organization' out of its ashes, is a crucial, indeed an axiomatic, component of this discourse of endings. It anticipates, if not predicts, the disintegration, or more accurately implosion, of Weber's 'iron cage' of bureaucratic domination and control under the multi-layered and disjunctive pressures exerted by globalization, entrepreneurialism and informationalism.

Yet, for all its awkward corners, the conception of a hybridisation response captures the essence of post-bureaucratic approaches to organizing under the umbrella term of 'new organizational forms' (Lewin, et al., 2002: 535). These new organizational forms relate to specific theorisings of organizing as networked (Miles, et al., 1997), cellular (Miles, et al., 1997), federal (Handy, 1993), hybrid (Pache and Santos, 2013), mutual (Koenig and Thiéart, 1990), creative (Fairtlough, 1994), flexible (Volberda, 1996), partial (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011), temporary (Karmowska, et al., 2017), virtual (Goldman, et al., 1995), and individualised (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1997). Underwritten by different methodological approaches, scholars desire and pursue different outcomes; consequently, some work is intentionally *descriptive* of organizing, and some work more avowedly *prescriptive*. In these theorisings of new organizational forms, scholars typically address how organizing might be designed in terms of flexibility and responsiveness (Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994b; Torbert, 1974; Volberda, 1996), framed by knowledge creation and learning (Adler, 1993; Nonaka and Toyama, 2007), and motivated by organizational effectiveness and survival in a dynamic environment (Birkinshaw, et al., 2008; Foss, 2003; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997). In all these approaches, a common attention is given to the relationship between design and form (Dunford, et al., 2013; Palmer, et al., 2007) which reproduces organizing as both 'interdependent and independent' (Clegg, 2011: 213) and which elevates the role of the technologically-enabled network in post-bureaucratic transformation (Powell, 1990; Castells, 2000).

Consistent with the hybridisation response, March (1991) theorises how organizing mutates and emerges from existing arrangements—this represents organizing as processes of exploration and exploitation. McKelvey (1999) further theorises how organizing coevolves with its environment (e.g. competitive dynamics, technological and institutional drivers), its organized population, and its forms—organizing, in this sense, occurs in processes of (co)evolution. Through hybridisation processes of exploration, exploitation, and (co)evolution, Puranam, et al. (2014: 174) identify how ‘new forms of organizing may in fact be new bundles of old solutions’ and, after Galunic and Simon (1998) and Kogut and Zander (1992) suggest that ‘organizations will have varying predispositions and levels of aptitude at discovering and implementing such recombinations’. They conclude that this is where opportunity exists to further develop organizational theory—to understand the bundles of co-occurring elements that seem to underlie organizing and to theorise about why the same bundles occur in widely disparate organizations.

In Table 3.i, below, I provide an overview of the literature pertaining to new organizational forms. The attentional foci of different hybridisations are presented alongside their common organizing characteristics, with reference to key representative scholarship.

Table 3.i An overview of literature: new organizational forms and their common organizing characteristics.

Attentional foci	Common organizing characteristics	Representative scholarship
Cellular organizing	· organizing as (quasi-)independent units/cells rather than matrix of hierarchical structure · decentralises (cf. holarchy) which often leads to leaderless structures/processes · franchise model develops from this, but with contextual/situational variation	Mackenzie, 1991; Mathews, 1996; Mella and Gazzola, 2017; Miles, et al., 1997; Morgan, 1986.
Creative organizing	· organizing a resolving paradox—inherent tension between freedom and constraint · uses creative responses to organizational inertia, organizational rules and resources, and organizational states desired by difficult to intend (e.g. spontaneity) · advances of design thinking	Fairtlough, 1994, 2007; Ortmann and Sydow, 2017, 2018; Rosso, 2014; Simon, 1997.
Federal organizing	· organizing as acknowledging that control and power do not always reside in one place · gives autonomy to individual divisions, distributing agency within certain boundaries · creates temporary alliances/joint ventures for expansion (rather than merger/acquisition)	Emmerich, 1971; Handy, 1993.

Flexible organizing	· organizing as move away from traditional practices (hierarchy, centralisation, formalised processes) · uses alliances and relationships built on trust and mutual benefit · develops capacity to respond to changing environmental conditions and promote innovation	Bernardes and Hanna, 2009; Clegg, 1990; Dunford, et al., 2013; Foss, 2003; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994b; Ouchi, 1980; Torbert, 1974; Twiname, et al., 2006; Volberda, 1996.
Hybrid organizing	· organizing as successful combination of competing institutional logics (with selective decoupling) · uses public-private partnerships with elements from state, market, and civil society · envisions a pluralistic institutional environment	Battilana and Dorado, 2010; Greenwood, et al., 2011; Hoffman, et al., 2012; Jay, 2013; Kraatz and Block, 2008; Pache and Santos, 2013; Powell, et al., 2018.
Individualised organizing	· organizing as flexible enough to harness the idiosyncratic knowledge and unique skills of each individual employee · use of individual creativity inspiring new initiatives · link/leverage entrepreneurial activity and individual expertise through integrated processes of organizational learning · continuous organizational renewal	Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1997.
Mutual organizing	· organizing as democratic and solidarity-promoting · uses combination of free membership, shared ownership (though not shares), independence, and limited profit sharing · forms on a voluntary basis to provide aid, benefits, insurance, credit or other services either to their members or to a larger population	Dreyfus, 1993; Koenig and Thiétart, 1990; Shinozawa, 2010.
Networked organizing	· organizing as linking assets/knowledge of organization with those of wider industry partners · uses principles of entrepreneurship, self-organization, member ownership · increasingly includes electronic information networks as social structures	Castells, 2000; Miles, et al., 1997; Miles and Snow, 1995; Powell, 1990.
Partial organizing	· organizing as a conceptual move beyond the traditional processes of organization and the anticipated outcomes of organizations · uses fewer organizational elements (hierarchies, decisions, membership, commands, monitoring, sanctions) · many forms of partial organization, consisting of various combinations of organizational elements	Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011; Brunsson and Olsen, 1998; Håkansson and Johansson, 1993.

Responsive organizing	· organizing as response to environmental uncertainty, enabling workers to design routinized jobs and allocate tasks more intelligently · move to provide workers with information, skills, and authority to resolve issues through discussion · move to more interactive structures create a framework for greater responsiveness to environmental changes	Birkinshaw, et al., 2008; Foss, 2003; Hodgson, 2004; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997.
Temporary organizing	· organizing as accomplishing an <i>ex ante</i>-determined task with a predetermined termination point · uses experimental initiatives and/or introducing new controversial solutions · meets differentiated needs of constituent members of the organization and its environment	Bakker and Janowicz-Panjaitan, 2009; Bakker, et al., 2016; Burke and Morley, 2016; Karmowska, et al., 2017; Lundin and Soderholm, 1995; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002.
Virtual organizing	· organizing as technological developments offering new possibilities and extending its scope in a virtual manner · beyond physical structure, reliance on technologies, mobile work, hybrid forms, boundaryless and inclusive, flexible and responsive · different degrees and different forms of virtuality	Child, 2015; Goldman, et al., 1995; Hedberg, et al., 1997; Warner and Witzel, 2004.

The attentional foci of different hybridisation responses illuminate, in varying degrees, the processes of exploration, exploitation, and (co)evolution (March, 1991; McKelvey, 1999); so too might we observe attempts to understand those bundles of co-occurring elements (Puranam, et al., 2014) which seek to reveal how the same approach to organizing might be put into practice in different settings. Hybridisation responses are seen to facilitate flexibility and responsiveness, elevate knowledge creation and learning, and deliver sustained organizational effectiveness and survival in an increasingly dynamic environment. Yet, critical scholarship is compelled to question the prevailing constraint of bureaucracy as the compulsory starting point for any analysis of any kind of organizing in any kind of social context. And, key questions arise as to the underlying values of any putative replacement for bureaucracy and the practical and political questions about the nature of accountability and control outside of formal organizational settings commonly understood as outcomes of organizing. This, at least to some extent, is explored in scholarship attentive to moves to reduce hierarchy and loosen rigidity, and in gestures towards a broader reinterpretation of the rationalism that underpins Weberian bureaucracy.

3.2.3 Moves to reduce hierarchy and loosen rigidity

A prevalent and over-arching theme for different hybridisation responses is the reduction of hierarchy. The “organic” form, proposed by Burns and Stalker (1961), is not a wholesale rejection of hierarchy, but it does introduce some distinctive principles which are carried forward in later hybridisations: a networked structure of control, authority, and communication; horizontal rather than vertical communication patterns; and more fluidity and ambiguity about individual roles (which was regarded as a motivating factor in generating greater individual commitment to the organization). Building on networked structures, horizontal communication patterns, and increased fluidity and ambiguity, scholars have continued to emphasise similar organizing shifts; different conceptualisations have been developed, including the network form, flat organizations, and the rise of team-based work (Baker, et al., 2006; Hamel, 2007; Malone, 2004; Romme, 1996; Zenger, 2002). These principles are brought forward in a research environment which adopts a largely theoretical focus on how organizing responds to an increased rate of change. Another shift is made towards increased knowledge work and the need for continual innovation. This thematic focus is evidenced in approaches to federal organizing, cellular organizing, and, to an extent, networked organizing. Alliances, communities of practice, joint ventures, partnerships, and face-to-face or virtual teams have entered the mainstream organizational repertoire as (structural) tools to enable learning and innovation. For example, Kanter (1985) signals the importance to large organizations of specific programs encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, arguing for minimising rules and procedures in favour of developing broadly skilled sets of employees in flexible units that can be (re)grouped as changing circumstances require. Her work has been central to different streams of scholarship focused on developing organizational structures, resources, and people.

An attentional focus has grown up which prescribes decentralisation, autonomy, and self-autonomy rather than engages in sustained empirical study which will form the basis of subsequent theorising. Castells (2000: 698) makes an important intervention, challenging the premise of the exclusively theoretical mode of knowledge development, writing:

The renewal of the study of society cannot proceed just on theoretical grounds. Sociology is an empirical science, within all the limits inherent to the constraints of observation under nonexperimental conditions. Thus, new issues, new concepts, new perspectives require new tools. The emergence of interactive information networks as the backbone of social structure makes even more acute the need to take up the greatest methodological challenge for empirical research in sociology.

This is a powerful argument in support of this thesis' extensive empirical work—legitimising the theoretical proposition set out in the previous chapter—which engages with interactive information networks and takes up new tools to build empirical resources to help consider the possibilities inherent in new issues, new concepts, and new perspectives.

Extant research also addresses how different hybridisation responses to organizing help organizations to be flexible, responsive, and innovative. Lee and Edmondson (2017: 41) acknowledge there is little work evaluating the success of these responses because of 'the many conceptions of post-bureaucratic organizing and the difficulty of controlling for the myriad factors that may influence organizational flexibility and innovation.' They further identify how much empirical research in this category takes a case study approach and is usually focused on revealing specific design features that enable these cases to exhibit greater flexibility or innovation (Adler, 1993; Burns and Stalker, 1961; Foss, 2003). Ciborra (1996) and Mintzberg (1979) highlight less formalised structures and recognise forms of authority that are not derived explicitly from hierarchical arrangements. This emphasises horizontal influence rather than vertical authority (Heckscher and Donnellon, 2004a; Kellogg, et al., 2006), leading to an emerging culture of learning and reflecting to promote flexibility and responsiveness (Hedberg, et al., 1976; Torbert, 1974). A trend towards richer empirical study is seen in work on hybrid, partial, and temporary organizing. This is most likely indicative of that shift in emphasis towards organizing individuals within structures which has more obvious opportunity for qualitative empirical engagement. Whilst it is underpinned by significant theoretical work, which advances conceptual and analytical frameworks, increased empirical work (e.g. Pache and Santos, 2013; Powell, et al., 2018) adds depth and critical sympathy to the experiences of the individual.

In exploring alternative organizing, scholars consider also coordinating arrangements that are not specifically hierarchical. They commonly identify two exemplars: the market, and the community. Like hierarchy, the market seems inextricably associated with the logic of the corporation; however, it is better presented as an organizing principle that coordinates work dynamically, based on autonomous individual action, and rejecting intervention from any top down authority (Håkansson and Johansson, 1993; Williamson, 1981; Zenger, 2002). Based on the persistence of organizational level analysis, scholars take up a position which seeks to describe and explain rather than to engage in any extensive empirically based observations. By integrating elements of market-based control into organizing processes, it

is claimed that a hybrid system is created wherein market principles are hoped to lessen the organization's reliance on hierarchical control (Foss, 2003; Foss and Dobravska, 2015; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997). A similar level of scholarly interest is directed towards the community, an organizing principle which is distinct in its characteristics from hierarchy and market (Adler, 2001; Adler and Heckscher, 2006; Ouchi, 1980). It is uniformly presented as a principle which describes how coordination is achieved through high levels of trust and strong social bonds; but much of the extant work lacks a critical attention which moves beyond a normative prescription. For this, we are better advised to turn to broader writings in the social sciences (Esposito, 1998; Turner, 1969) where attention is focused on the extent to which community may prove conceptually unviable or imprisoning, and the reality of community life can be very different from any theoretical modelling (Amit and Rapoport, 2002). Still, the community principle is extended to develop partnerships, open-source communities, and communities of practice within organizations (Adler, et al., 2008; Owen, 2008; Seidel and Stewart, 2011). In this sense, community organizing benefits knowledge creation, particularly compared to the impersonal organizing principle of the market, and the coercive organizing principle of hierarchy; moreover, community, as an organizing principle, benefits from claims that it is increasingly attractive as demands for knowledge production increase in the prevalent socio-economic conditions.

A further theme is worthy of consideration is the lessening rigidity and reliance on instrumental rationality. Torbert (1974) proposes a multi-stage model of organizational development that is broadly representative of work undertaken in this stream. His multi-stage model loosens the rigidity of a bureaucratic structure to a more flexible form, termed an "openly chosen structure", and he concludes that organizing should include horizontal rather than vertical role differentiation and communication which traverses hierarchical boundaries. This resonates with earlier discussions of horizontal structures which overcome managerial hierarchy and is typical of a response to organizing which maintains many of its core assumptions about the end/s of organizing and directs its attention towards humanising the means. The extent to which the outcome of this organizing innovation achieves its stated goals is neither critically evaluated nor empirically tested and, instead, adopts a prescriptive perspective in which theory and practice can seem disconnected. A similar trend is seen in Volberda's (1996) work, which identifies technology, structure, and culture as specific influences on flexibility in organizations; and, in work to develop a conceptual model, Volberda develops an increasingly disciplinary

reliance on the assumed benefits of experimentation and change. As such, these organizational innovations appear dependent on the diversity of organizing capability and the speed at which these capabilities can be deployed. So, whilst this stream moves towards a lessening of rigidity and reliance on instrumental rationality, it places increased importance on a set of decision-making practices which must be evaluated in the context of any corollary attempt at the reduction of decision-making hierarchies. As broadly representative of a stream of literature, Torbert (1974) and Volberda (1996), demonstrate something of the prescriptive and normative character of attempts to address the largely structural challenges of hybridisation responses to organizing.

The general shift away from machinery and manpower as drivers of organizing merits some recognition.¹⁰ Indeed, this is a stream of research which engenders a move towards a greater importance of organizational learning for developing theories of organizing. Adler (1993), for example, describes how learning is fostered in bureaucratic settings by giving more autonomy to front-line workers, whilst Nonaka and Toyama (2007) place special emphasis on the role of middle managers in facilitating knowledge creation.

Accommodating existing structures, whilst agitating for specific innovations to deliver a hybridisation of organizing, characterises that common ground which is shared by mainstream responses to theories of organizing seeking fitness for purpose. For scholars inclined to this perspective, flexibility and knowledge creation are constituted as vital for organizational survival in a hyper-competitive or dynamic environment (Birkinshaw, et al., 2008; Volberda, 1996; Zenger and Hesterly, 1997), and the emphasis on reinterpreting rationalism as a means of enabling organizations to survive in the twenty-first century highlights knowledge creation and innovation as the key drivers, and markers, of success.

3.2.4 Reinterpreting rationalism

Any rejection of the dominance of *zweckrational* over *wertrational* encourages a more fundamental consideration of different modes of rationality and a corollary broadening of attentional focus. The threads of critique which are developed through this chapter, and thesis, are inspired by the writing of Bloch to interrogate organizing for alterity and ask

¹⁰ I note that the words “machinery and manpower”, which were once the staple of the agricultural productivity discourse (Lindvall, 1973), have been recast in oppositional terms to account for the advance of machinery and automation relative to the decline of manpower and labour-intensive organizational processes.

questions of its commitment to a front line of aesthetic radicalism and of possibilities.¹¹ In this way, Bloch believed, the Not-Yet-Conscious desires of human beings could correspond to the Not-Yet-Become utopian contents of the world process itself.

I might take a moment to consider the wider implications of theories and theorisings emanating from mainstream approaches to organizing. I do not intend to characterise the stream as homogeneous, but to consider how we build a bridge from these hybridisation processes to advance more critically oriented discourses and practices. For critical scholars working on organizing, managerialism frequently comes in for special attention because it holds a privileged and destructively power-full position in relation to decision-making (Clegg et al., 2006b; Deetz, 1992). Mainstream commitments to reduce hierarchy, loosen rigidity, and assuage rationalism have, to a degree, an impact on managerial power; this is deserving of a weighty critical evaluation seldom undertaken within the mainstream. The power implicit in ‘making things happen through the exercise of initiative and agency’ (Clegg, 2009: 313) routinely reproduces the hierarchical theorising of managerialism as constitutive of organizing; at the same time, hierarchical organizing confirms the privilege of the manager over the subordinate in social discourse that legitimates these processes of organizing without due consideration of human values, or of strategic intent (Deetz, 1992; Deetz and Mumby, 1990). So, perhaps, the enduring political strength of modernity, bureaucracy, hierarchy, and managerialism lies in the widespread perception of truth that they continually (re)produce; and being perceived as “truth”, the rationality of organizing as modernity (and the principles and practices to which it gives life) needs little further empirical grounding as it is already deeply embedded in many social discourses and practices (Baunsgaard and Clegg, 2012) and is taken up—unconsciously—as truth. The assumption of rationalism by dominant social groups influences the social practices of organizing; that is, according to Baunsgaard and Clegg (2012: 225), how modes of rationality act as ‘the steering of organization’. Indeed, the authors identify how this ‘steering’ is framed by rationalism and its relations with identity, power, and knowledge. Their argument concludes thus: ‘[t]he more a rationality . . . is perceived as ‘truth’, the more powerful it is . . . and the less rationalization it necessitates in influencing social practice’. The implication of this might be: if the social practice of organizing is to move

¹¹ Adorno (1970: 37–8) writes that, ‘[n]ow that American hotels are decorated with abstract paintings . . . and aesthetic radicalism has shown itself to be socially affordable, radicalism itself must pay the price that it is no longer radical’. McCloughlin (2012) argues that Adorno equates radicalism with danger; perhaps the danger of aesthetic radicalism lies in its fundamental challenge to cultural norms; and that this, in turn, constitutes—or is constitutive of—a challenge to social order more generally.

beyond a hierarchical reading of the world order then scholarship advancing knowledge about organizing for alterity will need to advance new empirical truths—in the fullest possible sense of the possibility of Bloch’s *novum*.

What such *novum* may become to be is heavily dependent on context, culture, and the political ambitions of individual scholars. Willmott (2011: 257) argues that ‘the situation is perplexing, and not least because there is uncertainty and disagreement about what “bureaucracy” is, what it once was, and what it is becoming.’ This terrain is strewn with conflict. Some scholars argue for reform along the lines of “bureaucracy plus innovation” (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Peters and Waterman, 1982) whilst others argue for a more radical reinterpretation of rationalism (Dijksterhuis, et al., 1999; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996; Powell and Di Maggio, 2012). And, some have held fast to bureaucracy’s core attributes in clarifying roles and responsibilities to delivering efficient, productive ends (Adler and Borys, 1996; Magee and Galinsky, 2008). In each of these contexts, the response made to reducing hierarchy (and other coercive elements of organizing) and taking a less rigid approach to organizing (incorporating a reduction in its reliance on instrumental rationality) seems to have become a project in itself. But, the collective development of responsibility, dignity, and personality may reveal possibilities, and prompt responses which articulate newly discoverable meaning and hint at new empirical subjectivities.

3.3 Alternative approaches to organizing

In order to know too exactly what one wants, one must only want mediocre things and imagine the world as a banal catalogue from a novelty shop. A precise desire finds itself restricted by that very fact, whereas a somewhat confused conception enables the miraculous roses of the unconscious to flower in their wild and frightening liberty.

Pierre Quillard, 1892 [cited in, and translated by, McGuinness, 2015: 94]

Contemporary attempts at organizing are not confined to hybridisation responses which, much like Quillard’s (1892) description of wanting mediocre things from the banal catalogue of a novelty shop, adopt and adapt modernist organizing principles in the context of a postmodern society (Courpasson and Reed, 2004; Du Gay, 2000). Whilst mainstream approaches to organizing explore those modes of rationality which support (or stymie) well-meaning attempts to reduce hierarchy and loosen rigidity (and, as such, any reliance on instrumental rationality)—and acknowledge the importance of the relationship between

the organization and its wider environment—other responses take more radical stances towards influencing social order. Reedy and Learmonth (2009: 244) identify responses to organizing that emerge from ‘radical social ideas or grass-roots movements’. The respective commitments of ‘anarchism, syndicalism, the ecological movement, the co-operative movement, libertarian communism, self-help groups, or . . . feminism’ inspire radical responses to organizing (Burrell, 1992: 92), yet, scholarly attention within the field of organizational studies has largely focused on critiques of mainstream organizations, rather than on ‘cultivating new organizational practices and subjectivities’ (Land and King, 2014: 924).

This chapter now reaches out to scholars who have broken cover from the social perspectives and norms of organizing that envelop us in its discourse, and who engage with contemporary discourses and practices. Atzeni (2012: 1) argues that the norms of organizing are so deeply engrained that ‘to think about a different, more democratic, equalitarian, less hierarchical and authoritarian way of organizing work is at best treated as a utopia.’ But utopian ideas can be valuable for confronting the norms of organizing and nourishing alternatives; Bloch’s (1954, 1955, 1959) work, for example, argues for the imagination of new social institutions and practices, and the embedding of new ethics and values. Burrell and Dale (2002: 106) claim: ‘[u]topian thinking, in a broad sense (Kumar, 1989: 19-20), is more than More. It encompasses our capacity as humans for the free-floating imagination of how things could be different and better.’¹² Imagining how things could be different and better can be regarded ‘an organizational matter’ and the alternatives that are put forward attempt to ‘remedy the perceived shortcomings of a particular present age’ (Parker, 2002b: 2). The utopian hope which inspires work on alternative organizing is subject to two forces: firstly, that any alternative is both an act of, and is met with, resistance; and secondly, that current conditions inevitably make demands on the adoption of some degree of managerialism (Atzeni, 2012). These qualities—of confronting current organizational discourses and practices and, crucially, nourishing new ones—tie utopias, Bloch’s ontology of the Not-Yet-Being, via prefiguration, to the thesis’ central conception of organizing for alterity. Prefiguration facilitates an approach which is both strategic and adventurous; it removes any temporal distinction between the present

¹² The reference is to Sir Thomas More (1477–1535), writer credited with the first use of “utopia”, a word he used to describe a perfect, imaginary world. More’s writing imagines a complex, self-contained community set on an island, in which people share a common culture and way of life. He derives the word “utopia” from *ou-topos* (Greek) meaning “no place” or “nowhere”.

and the alterity of utopias Not-Yet-Become, and it enables, enacts, and embodies the hoped-for future in the here-and-now.

3.3.1 A shared prefigurative ethos

At its heart, prefiguration deals with the question of how social change can be enacted (Epstein, 2002; Siltanen, et al., 2014; Van de Sande, 2013). This suggests how, and why, a shared prefigurative ethos might be a potent way to conceptualise a myriad of approaches to organizing for alterity. Conceptual interest in prefiguration has been elevated in discussions of contemporary social movement activity, including the alter-globalisation movement (Maeckelbergh, 2011), environmental direct action (Szerszynski, 1999), the public space occupations of 2011 (Juris, 2012; Razsa and Kurnik, 2012), various alternative modes of consumption or provisioning (Portwood-Stacer, 2012), and the notion of “free spaces” (Futrell and Simi, 2004; Polletta, 1999). As a practice, prefiguration has become deeply embedded in social movements which directly implicates it in influencing wider paradigmatic debates.

Prefiguration (Boggs, 1977) was a conception developed as a political logic, posing a direct attack on statist Marxism, which subsequently was used to make sense of the tensions in left-wing politics of the 1960s in United States of America (Epstein, 1991). A main goal of prefigurative politics is the disruption of dominant (Young and Schwartz, 2012), hegemonic (Polletta, 1999) or mainstream (Leach, 2013) institutions, and their replacement by alternative ones. Its advocates believe that the transformation towards a more peaceful, democratic, and equitable society needs organizations that embody those values from the ground up; as such, mainstream approaches to organizing for alterity should be considered insufficient. As a political conception, prefiguration orients organizational politics as an instrument of social change. Boggs (1977: 100) conceptualised prefiguration as ‘the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal.’ Prefiguration constitutes the experimental actualisation of ideals in which individuals organize such that they become collective. Consequently, attention is focused on organizational discourses and practice, in both internal and external environments; prefigurative modes of organizing and tactics reflect the collective, hoped-for future (Gordon, 2007) such that collective discourses and practices are constitutive of, and constituted by, its aims (Flesher Fominaya, 2007).

Prefiguration is a 'direct theory'—one that theorises through action, or through doing (Sturgeon, 1995: 36). It is not a theory of social change that analyses the current situation, develops an alternative model, and sets out a strategy for reaching a corollary, predetermined goal. Instead, prefiguration refers to the way in which resistance is organized, where the means reflect the end/s (Graeber, 2002), and to the way that individuals and collectives build new institutions and organize themselves afresh (Yates, 2015). Rather than projecting the desired outcomes of action into the future, prefiguration may be understood as a politics of immanence which creates those outcomes of action in the here and now (Gautney, 2009). It might be helpful to deepen our understanding of the character of prefiguration as strategic and adventurous—a process infused by *différance*: '[s]trategic because no transcendent truth . . . can govern . . . the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple . . . strategy that orients tactics according to a final goal' (Derrida, 1972: 7). Prefiguration—approached as a process of *différance*—is a playful combination of theory and practice that "produces" differences, and the effects of differences, by rejecting organizing as a *fait accompli* and replacing this discursive and practicable closure with a multiplicity of open-ended possibilities. Prefiguration attends to possibilities; and focuses on the creation (and embodiment) of alternatives, involving alternative or additional sets of activities, communities, and ways of life (Breines, 1989).

In terms of prefiguring alternatives, organizing for alterity involves practices that foreshadow the desired future of society; central to its conception, therefore, is that rather than ends justifying means, the means of prefigurative politics reflect, or are somehow equivalent to, the end/s (e.g. Calhoun, 1993; Franks, 2003; Maeckelbergh, 2009; Rucht, 1988). Characterised by a prefigurative ethos, the present struggle and the future goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present. Organizing for alterity may be qualified as prefigurative when it fulfils certain conditions in the way in which it is performed. These conditions, for example, might reflect practices which explicitly confront and reject hierarchy as it entails domination and oppression (Maeckelbergh, 2009) and take up and nourish flexible practices, such as networked organizing, that facilitate acts of organization without resort to central control (Castells, 2012; Featherstone, 2008).

Prefiguration has attracted critiques. Activists at the front line of social change have been accused of fetishising process at the expense of getting anything done (Cornell, 2011; Smucker, 2013). This risks alienating newcomers, particularly those of lower socio-economic means, and those unaccustomed to activist subcultures (Leondar-Wright, 2014;

Polletta, 2005). Whilst advocates of prefiguration show awareness that prefigurative goals are often in tension with strategic ones (Breines, 1989; Epstein, 1991, 2001; Hammond, 2013; Leach, 2013), others emphasise how prefiguration bridges instrumental and expressive goals (Maeckelbergh, 2011; Juris, 2008, 2012). Still, in collapsing the temporal distinction between future and present, between end/s and means (Kokkinidis, 2011), 'everyday practices are used as building blocks to construct a hoped-for future in the present' (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010: 476). To advance this in the context of this thesis, the shared prefigurative ethos of organizing for alterity relies on two streams of action: the first confronts current organizational discourses and practices; and, the second nourishes alternative organizational discourses and practices. Maeckelbergh (2009) argues that these streams of action are non-negotiable; each require a degree of simultaneity because, without the other, each is of limited use.

3.3.2 A myriad of approaches

In the approaches we see to organizing for alterity, specifically within this context of alternative organizing, a rich body of discourses and practices emerges as constitutive of new social relations. Many household names are examples, in varying degrees, of organizing for alterity and have attracted scholarly attention. These include *Wikipedia* (Bruns, 2008; Jemielniak, 2014; Zammuto, et al., 2007), *Linux* (Iannacci, 2005; Zammuto, et al., 2007), *Zappos* (Dymek and Zackariasson, 2017; Gray, et al., 2010; Kopelman, et al., 2012). These examples each signal a set of principles and practices which are distinct from other responses to organizing. Often the distinction is in terms of building structures of horizontal doing where hierarchy (or at least formal hierarchy) is reduced. Growing empirical evidence suggests individuals in these sites have more influence and decision-making over their work, the workplace being characterised by open channels of communication, with some further evidence of worker ownership as constitutive of workplace democracy (Battilana, et al., 2018). Consistent with the core commitments of prefiguration, a myriad of approaches to alternative organizing simultaneously confront current organizational discourses and practices and nourish alternatives to take their place (Maeckelbergh, 2009). And, crucially, in the empirical studies which scholars continue to

undertake, we can observe how prefigurative practice is leading to the realisation of new possibilities and new approaches to constructing theories of organizing.¹³

In Table 3.ii, below I provide an overview of the literature pertaining to alternative organizational forms. The attentional foci of different approaches are presented alongside their common organizing characteristics, with reference to key representative scholarship. Juris (2008: 82) highlights the slogan of the World Social Forum: “Another World Is Possible”. The different approaches that are evaluated in this chapter are selected on the basis that, in some way, they live up to this slogan and embrace the promise of a prefigurative dynamic.

Table 3.ii An overview of the literature: alternative organizational forms and their common organizing characteristics.

Attentional foci	Common organizing characteristics	Representative scholarship
Anarchist organizing	· organizing as the absence of government, thus the absence of authority in organizing · appropriate social relations: organizing not framed by competition—freedom from toil, universal affluence · outcomes of anarchist organizing: voluntary, functional, temporary, and small	Bakunin, 1973; Day, 2005; Guérin, 1970; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1998; Land and King, 2014; Malatesta, 1892–1926; Nozick, 1974; Reedy, 2002; Rocker, 2004; Ward, 1966.
Collectivist organizing	· organizing as emphasising cohesiveness among individuals and prioritization of the group over self · rejection of bureaucratic standards in favour of efforts realising wholly different value · organizing as relationship building amongst individuals in communities	Barnard, 2011; Edley, et al., 2004; Kurutz, 2007; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Stall and Stoecker, 1998; Vadi, et al., 2002.
Co-operative organizing	· organizing as autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet common economic, social, and cultural needs/aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise · multiple forms ranging in scale and scope; the largest most like mainstream organizations · mix of social benefit interests and capitalistic property-right interests	Case and Taylor, 1979; Cheney, 2002; Cheney, et al., 2014; Paranque and Willmott, 2014; Webb and Cheney, 2014.

¹³ As I edit this thesis, *Les gilets jaunes* advance their cause in Paris (and now beyond) through the discourses and practices individual/collectivist organizing. I hope that, amongst their number, are those inclined towards social anthropology who can advance our understanding of this modern phenomenon.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_vests_movement

Ecological organizing	· organizing as diverse scientific, social, and political movement reconsidering of dominant Western organizing practices (patriarchy, capitalism, globalisation) · sustainable management of resources and environment through policy and behaviour change · humanity as participant in (not enemy of) natural (and human-made) ecosystems	Cato, 2014; Folke, 2006; Ganesh and Zoller, 2014; Harding, 2012; King, 1995; Passmore, 1974; Schumacher, 1973; Stead and Stead, 2009; Whiteman and Cooper, 2000.
Feminist organizing	· organizing as challenge of women's subordination to men, especially as represented by the types of behaviours that are valued in society · sustained social movement organizing, incorporating direct action and indirect action · connection with other causes, with feminist perspectives influencing organizing models for organizing peace, anti-nuclear, radical environmentalism, LGBTQ+	Ashcraft, 2001, 2009; Billing, 2011; Brown, 1992; Butler, 1990; Ewig and Ferree, 2013; Hyde, 2018; Pullen, et al., 2017.
Libertarian communist organizing	· organizing society based on the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' · importance of prefiguration; a real movement towards such a society in the world right now · common ownership, without wages, and without the state	Brecher, 2014; Kropotkin, 1902, 1906; Leval and García-Guirao, 2018; Wilde, 1891.
Syndicalist organizing	· organizing as revolutionary and constituting of direct-action · general preference for federalism over centralism · irreconcilable interests of the worker and employer; direct action to pursue better working conditions <i>and</i> overthrow capitalism (though with no clear alternative presented)	Jessop, 2017; McKay, 2012; Rocker, 2004; Simons, 1944; Van der Welt, 2018; Zimmer, 2018.
Open source organizing	· organizing as individuals, loosely bound as communities, working towards a shared vision or goal, sometimes at cross purposes · modelling knowledge sharing, and coordinating development projects · flexible organizing design: single vendor, developer community, user community, competence centres	Bergquist and Ljunberg, 2001; Iannacci, 2005; O'Mahony and Ferraro, 2007.
Queer organizing	· organizing as an articulation of the values and vision of LGBTQ+ liberation, and an attempt to not let gender get in the way of organizing · direct and indirect action against complicity with systems of oppression · addressing disparities produced by a queer-phobic society through a broad and expansive coalition of people and institutions	Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008; Butler, 1990; D'Emilio, 2016; Parker, 2001.

Self-help group organizing	· organizing as informal groups of people who come together to address their common problems—mutual support · voluntary, issue-based, participatory, shared responsibility, democratic decision-making, governance by members, fluid across issues, possibly federated · not purely about individual change and intra-personal empowerment, but also about policy change and collective empowerment	Bieler, 2011; Chatterton, 2010; Wall, et al., 1986.
Social movement organizing	· organizing as social movements: non-bureaucratically structured groups · rejection of centralized hierarchy, and/or the formal title or right that someone must oblige others to comply · prefigurative, horizontal social relations: void of coordination, intentionality, structure or clear membership challenges assumptions of unitarity, univocity, and goal specificity of traditional, formal organizing	Bakker, et al., 2017; Barnard, 2011; Bieler, 2011; Böhm, et al., 2010; Crossley, 2003; Day, 2005; Halvorsen, 2012; Hsu, 2013; Hyde, 2018; Johnston, et al., 1994; Lee, 2007; Pichardo, 1997; Reinecke, 2018; Smith, 2008.
Transformational organizing	· organizing as practical opposition to the power structures of colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism · thoughtful, practical and strategic process to affect revolutionary change within society · systems approach viewed as attending to personal and/or spiritual development as well as systemic social issues because action is not enough	Capra, 1997; Scharmer, 2009; Senge, et al., 2005; Karakas, 2010.
Teal organizing	· organizing as a response to paradigmatic change in which evolutionary perspective gives rise to next-stage consciousness · three core breakthroughs: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose · approach inspired by developmental psychologists to address individual and collective unfolding, taming the ego, inner rightness, and a desire to connect with community and nature	Laloux, 2014, 2016.

Beyond the hybridisation responses—which I argue characterise mainstream approaches to organizing with any possibility of alterity—other scholars, notably those from critical traditions, draw on a wider range of theoretical resources to advance critiques of mainstream discourses and practices. These critiques, combined with empirical study of alternative discourses, practices, and subjectivities, open multiple possibilities, and are further set apart from mainstream approaches in that the nature of their alterity is not necessarily formally predetermined. Franks (2003: 17) argues that, ‘what is desired must also be involved in the methods of reaching that aim’. In line with this expectation, this chapter now evaluates different approaches to organizing for alterity. I separate out the

two streams of prefigurative action (1) confronting current arrangements and (2) nourishing alternatives. I do this with a twofold purpose: to deepen understanding of them as discrete elements in order that we might understand the importance of their interrelation. However, following Maeckelbergh (2009), I hold that these streams of action require a degree of simultaneity; separating them in the coming section should not signal any sense of privileging one over the other. And, as the chapter goes on to illustrate, the act of separating out the streams of confrontation and nourishment is a far from straightforward undertaking.

3.4.3 Confronting current organizational arrangements

Confrontation opens up the space necessary for experiments in horizontal democracy and it safeguards these spaces from cooptation. Physical confrontation on the streets not only forms part of the raison d'être for the alternative villages, but it also often literally defends these spaces. Confrontation and conflict within the alternative spaces of horizontal decision-making are also common, and it ensures that as power centralizes—whether in people, groups, or institutions—it is continuously confronted and decentralized.

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Confronting current organizational arrangements necessitates engaging in acts of resistance in the spirit of an aesthetic radicalism which refuses to accept a transcendent truth. As such, organizing for alterity is both delivered by, and met with, resistance. Maeckelbergh (2011) clarifies how resistance within alternative organizations can take aim at the centralisation of power; she argues that prefigurative practice ensures that social norms and organizational practices are continuously challenged and confronted. Maeckelbergh sees this as not simply a necessary strategy for deconstructing existing organizational arrangements, but also for constructing viable alternatives. Moreover, she regards prefiguration as a socially responsible practice; her extensive empirical work in the alter-globalisation movement permits her claim that, if current structures were ever successfully dismantled and removed, 'prefiguration ensures that the movement would be ready with alternative governing structures that have been tried and tested' (Maeckelbergh, 2011: 15).

Prefiguration is an embodied form of resistance, in which collective action and creativity combine to confront organizational arrangements and nourish alternatives. Resistance, at least the type which is most often encountered in critically-oriented organizational studies, is focused on a general opposition to capitalist, managerialist forms of control rather than

on an explicit and creative desire for alterity (e.g. Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Fleming, 2014; Fleming and Spicer, 2014; King and Learmonth, 2015). Conceptually, De Certeau (1980) builds on knowledge about resistance: for Foucault (1975), power meets resistance at every point, but De Certeau (1980: xiv) inquires further and asks ‘what popular procedures . . . manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only to evade them, and finally, what “ways of operating” form the counterpart . . . of the mute processes that organise the establishment of socio-economic order’. Scott (1998) adds a further dimension and identifies power as twofold: not just the power of rationality and instrumentality as belonging to the powerful, but also identifying the power of the weak, who may refuse to comply, and embody their own power in everyday acts of resistance. Or instead, we might approach resistance through the scholarship of Bourdieu, whose conceptualisation of habitus attempts to steer clear of becoming overly deterministic, through an understanding of “regulated improvisation” by accommodating the possibility of both individual and collective freedom within social structures or practices. Practices, such as organizing, are logical activities that come from a habitus connected to a given field; resistance to these organizing practices thus brings together intellectual and activist notions of organizing. The aesthetic radicalism of organizing for alterity might be met with resistance, but for Bourdieu (1980: 141) there is a clear pathway to perform its own acts of resistance: that is ‘to bring to consciousness, and so modify, the categories of thought which help to orient individual and collective practices and the categories through which distributions are perceived and appreciated.’

Cheney (2014) identifies different contexts in which organizing for alterity is situated and describes the trends to which it responds. These trends, he claims, are framed by responses to globalisation and inequality; and, by efforts to promote resistance to globalisation and consumerism, address cultural imperialism, reinvigorate democracy, counteract social and psychological fragmentation, support identity, confront the global environmental crisis, make use of communication technologies, and pursue trans-localism. Trends such as these confront and nourish; in so doing, they offer broad, contextual critiques to current organizational discourses and practices whilst, simultaneously, remaining open to the identification and realisation of new possibilities. Cheney and Munshi (2017: 59) further argue that, in the context of alternative organizations seeking to prefigure social change, ‘there is a family resemblance in that prevailing assumptions about organizations, capitalism, bureaucracy, power and praxis are challenged’. Taken together, contemporary trends and assumptions about organizing, indicate a series of targets towards which

resistance can be directed. Acknowledging these trends, and their broad, underlying contextual critiques, this chapter now considers current organizational discourses and practices. I select three themes for specific attention: firstly, confronting systemic inequality within organizing; secondly, confronting the antidemocratic tendencies of organizing; and, thirdly, confronting the environmentally destructive nature of organizing. In the sections which follow, I unpack each of these themes. This approach allows me to highlight how confrontations to current organizational arrangements overlap and intersect, and how alternative, prefigurative approaches find thematic commonality across their own respective discourses and practices. To do this, I draw on empirical and theoretical resources to interrogate how current organizational arrangements are confronted whilst also indicating where this intersects with a prefigurative commitment to nourish alternative organizational arrangements.

3.3.1.1 Confronting systemic inequality

Amis, et al. (2018) take aim at inequality, institutions and organizations in their introduction to a special issue of *Organization Studies* journal. They identify how social structures for the free market make inequality almost inevitable and, combined with organizational practices that maintain and enhance societal inequalities, expose the role of organizations and institutions in reproducing inequality on a global scale. Alternative approaches to organizing identify inequality as a major social challenge which needs to be addressed in new discourses and practices; prefigurative approaches to organizing confront inequality and nourish alternatives by recognising the trends to which it responds and making inequality a target for action. Within the range of alternative approaches to organizing set out in Table 3.ii, inequality is commonly expressed in terms of (a) inequality of economic opportunity and (b) structural/intersectional subordination—where the subordination of individuals takes place in the employer/employee relationship, as well as on the basis of individual characteristic (e.g. gender, sexuality, class). These inequalities are confronted in ways which cut across the different discourses and practices of different, prefigurative approaches. The specific nature of confrontation varies across the range of alternative approaches with a mixture of direct and indirect action; and, whilst the prefigurative nature of these approaches dictates that alternative organizing should both confront and nourish, some approaches do appear to be more attuned to one or the other. Nonetheless, different approaches share commonalities: for example, cooperative organizing and libertarian communist organizing both confront capitalistic property rights and ownership; social movements and anarchist organizing confront hierarchy and

centralisation; and feminist and queer approaches to organizing confront those discourses and practices that subordinate individual characteristics.

Taking a focus on the specific discourses and practices of feminist organizing exposes how the inequality in mainstream organizing can be exposed and confronted and demonstrates how future arrangements might be better crafted to serve society more equitably (Ashcraft, 2001; Brown, 1992; Kleinman, 1996). The social construction of gender, such that men, women, and others beyond and between, experience societal expectations of adhering to normative behaviour and roles, faces increased challenge in the context of organizing for alterity. This attracts attention in mainstream and alternative settings. Feminist organizing explicitly confronts the structural subordination of women to men. In making such a response, proponents of feminist organizing (at least in so much as feminism might be considered a universally-agreed construct) set their ambitions on trying to understand the required shifts, the factors that influence these shifts, and the consequences for feminist objectives (Ewig and Ferree, 2013). Brown (1992: 3) argues: 'until we look closely at how women contribute (or are prevented from contributing) to organisation we will stop short of the radical reframing and restructuring of organisational life which is necessary both on the grounds of effectiveness and of equity.' Brown's empirical work details volunteer organizing situated in *Greystone Women's Centre* (a volunteer community development project set up under the auspices of urban development) and describes the processes of creating a situation of distributed leadership in the context of non-hierarchical values shared by a fluid and part-time group of women. Informed by a collectivity, anarchism, and a deeply held feminist perspective, Brown engages in confronting dominant, hegemonic, and mainstream organizational discourses and practices, and provides rich detail of alternatives which nourish the development of new discourses, practices, and a specifically feminist subjectivity. Her study, she concludes, 'should have removed any lingering doubts that characterisations of non-hierarchical organisation as "spontaneous" or "natural" are in any way adequate descriptions of what is involved' (Brown, 1992: 147). It is sobering to note, a decade later, that Gherardi (2010: 229) reports little progress: '[o]rganizational theory, as a body of knowledge about organizations and as a theoretical discourse, has adopted the gender perspective somewhat belatedly' such that 'in managerial applications of OT [organizational theory] preoccupation with gender discrimination and integration policies has bred an obsession with inclusion . . . that reproduce its fundamental "otherness"'.

3.3.1.2 Confronting anti-democratic tendencies

The argument advanced by Gary Hamel (2011) in his popular article, *First, let's fire all the managers*, reveals the extent to which discourses about the anti-democratic tendencies of organizing have begun to inflect upon some of the most mainstream publications. Whilst this thesis might not find much more in common with the perspectives of many of the authors publishing in this sphere, it is worth noting that organizational democracy has increasingly become a target of mainstream and alternative approaches. Attending to specifically alternative approaches to organizing, the anti-democratic tendencies of organizing represent a further social challenge which is targeted by a range of discourses and practices; those that adopt a prefigurative approach confront and nourish with a degree of simultaneity. Table 3.ii reveals the different confrontations made to organizing's anti-democratic tendencies, specifically highlighting the systemic issues associated with dominant, hegemonic, and mainstream organizing—the formal hierarchy which constitutes and is constituted by bureaucracy, and the centralisation of power and control. These confrontations clearly overlap and intersect with several the issues surrounding inequality, and the prefigurative approaches to organizing documented in this chapter similarly cut across respective discourses and practices. Noting a series of direct and indirect interventions, common approaches confront bureaucracy and the formal hierarchy (e.g. this can be observed in discourses and practices of anarchist organizing, social movements, and libertarian communist organizing) and the systemic abuses of power and control (e.g. as seen in feminism organizing, transformational organizing, and teal organizing approaches). As with the commonalities highlighted previously in the context of confronting inequality, this represents a simplification intended to demonstrate what alternative approaches share in their respective diagnoses of discourses and practices needing to be confronted—and alternatives to be nourished—rather than any misjudged reductionism about the complexity of the undertaking.

The example of anarchist organizing has an important significance in this context. Contrary to popular representations of anarchy as having no rules, anarchist writing emphasises the need for organizing; though not the anti-democratic kind of organizing which is imposed from above, but the natural order which promotes true unity—rather than the false unity brought about by hierarchical constraint (Guérin, 1970; Proudhon, 1938). Whilst anarchism is more generally understood in popular discourse in terms of political protest, often with violent, confrontational undertones (Chesterton, 2010; Conrad, 2011; Pynchon, 2006), it emerges from a rich tradition encompassing libertarianism (Nozick, 1974), egoistic

individualism (Stirner, 1995), mutualism and collectivism (Kropotkin, 1902), revolutionary activism (Bakunin, 1973), and federalism (Proudhon, 1979). Contemporary performances of anarchism are seen in new social movements (Crossley, 2003; Day, 2005), such as the alter-globalization movement (Feigenbaum, et al., 2014; Maeckelbergh, 2009), self-identifying anarchist groups (Sutherland, et al., 2014), environmentalist organizations (Day, 2005; Sutherland, et al., 2014) and activist groups such as *Occupy* (Graeber, 2013; Halvorsen, 2014; Reinecke, 2014). Reinecke's (2018) empirical study of *Occupy London* is particularly helpful because it reveals how anarchist organizing confronts the anti-democratic tendencies of mainstream organizational discourses and practices. She notes that *Occupy London* achieve this by being 'grounded in everyday practice' and taking aim at 'wider societal change' (Reinecke, 2018: 1305). This demonstrates the indubitable link between anarchist organizing and prefigurative politics and elevates the role of democracy in alternative discourses and practices of organizing. Reinecke (2018: 1318) argues that, whilst 'prefigurative politics has emerged as a global practice . . . scholars have paid surprisingly little attention to it'. But she makes a broader point about anarchist discourses and practices being subject to 'a perpetual process of experimentation' (Reinecke, 2018: 1318); experimentation prefigures an organizational outcome which is not predetermined. Principles and practices are subject to constant reflexive inquiry, prompting challenge and experimentation (Maeckelbergh, 2015); the heterogeneity of anarchism encompasses resistance to current social and organizational norms, and nourishing an alterity in which individuals and institutions can organize themselves more democratically. In broad terms, Land and King (2014: 928) cautiously identify an ideal outcome of anarchist organizing which is an organization that is 'flat, non-hierarchical, radically democratic and autonomous', noting that this description emphasises an organizational end/s and means. The embedding of autonomous and democratic organizing practices amongst anarchist writing helps prefigure 'a different vision of how the world might be organized, thereby inspiring hope that another world is possible' (Smith, 2008: 203).

3.3.1.3 Confronting destructive practices

Critiques of the neoliberal model (Chomsky, 1999; Hibou, 2015; Sennett, 2006) and emerging discourses of economies (Piketty, 2013), social inequalities (Bauman, 2011), and politics (Cross, 2017) suggest not only the incompleteness or inadequacy of knowledge about organizing for advancing our stewardship of structures, resources, and people but also its fundamentally destructive characteristics. This is seen, of course, in the destructive practices of systemic inequality and anti-democratic tendencies of mainstream organizing.

It is also seen in those discourses and practices which are environmentally—and materially—destructive. Acknowledging those critiques that emerge from analysis of current organizational discourses and practices, and from careful attention to organizing for alterity, the environmentally destructive nature of mainstream organizing represents a clear and present danger, which finds itself targeted by a range of alternative discourses and practices. The prefigurative nature of these alternative discourses and practices mean that confrontation and nourishment develop hand-in-hand. In Table 3.ii, the responses to the environmentally destructive character of organizing discourses and practices are noted. An emerging theme might be observed, in conjunction with the two previous discussions of systemic inequality and anti-democratic tendencies, in that the specific confrontations made to mainstream organizing discourses and practices pertain to confronting the dominant, hegemonic organizing practices (encompassing confronting patriarchy, capitalism, globalisation) and confronting subordination (in this context the subordination of natural ecosystems to human systems). This reveals how confrontations overlap and intersect, and how prefigurative approaches find thematic commonality. The revolutionary ambition of syndicalist organizing, for example, with its predisposition towards direct action, confronts current discourses and practices head on. Conversely, transformational organizing, and Teal organizing (which frames the empirical setting for the thesis) confronts the power structures and destructive practices implicit in current discourses and practices more indirectly, drawing on its own discourses of spirituality and evolution, rather than engaging in discursive and practicable acts of revolution. In the scholarship which attends to an ecological perspective on organizing is helpful here. Whilst it makes its own responses to inequality and democracy, it has further value in articulating the notion of the human as enemy of natural ecosystems. We can note that the prefigurative quality of this approach is seen not just in the critiques it articulates, but in its advocacy for alternatives—in this case, the sustainable management of resources and the environment through specific policy and behaviour change.

Those approaches to organizing which draw on environmental perspectives occupy a position somewhere between frontier economics and deep ecology (Lovelock, 1979; Passmore, 1974; Ruether, 1992). Advocates confront the extent to which organizing is inextricably intertwined with, and dependent on, the ecological system, with all organizing principles and practices having deeper, ecological consequences deserving closer attention (Bookchin, 1982; Devereaux Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995). Because human beings have a strong need to construct their relationship with the surrounding world (Berger and

Luckman, 1967) concepts like sustainability and accountability have proved helpful in bridging between the divide between ecological and social systems. Indeed, a number of highly-professionalised Non-Governmental Organizations (such as the *World Wildlife Fund*, *Greenpeace International*) work alongside grass-roots movements (such as *Extinction Rebellion*) and command global attention, articulating ‘environmental messages and influenc[ing] the framing of the environmental problematique’ (MacKay and Munro, 2012: 1515). This is a highly engaged, widely coordinated, and deeply politicised activism (which might be seen to jar with the gentle radicalism of the ecological perspective, for example, of the peace-promoting Gaia hypothesis). Lovelock (2011: 71): argues, ‘[w]e should be the heart and mind of the Earth, not its malady.’ Whilst ecological perspectives are not homogeneous, it is reasonable to identify how a series of attempts are made to promote a plausible counternarrative to our relationship with the environment. To strike at the heart of how our relationship with the environment is constructed, requires its proponents to confront those notions of truth which, at least in organizational terms, have become monopolised by reductionism, positivism, and objectivism (Sterling, 2011: 25). Ecological activism, and a corollary attachment to systemic thought, seeks to advance movement in three areas of human knowing and experience: ‘perception (or the affective dimension), conception (or the cognitive dimension), and practice (or the intentional dimension)’ (Sterling, 2001: 25). By confronting mainstream discourses and practices of organizing, ecological perspectives are underpinned by a desire to expand an ethical sense of concern, an evidence-based awareness of patterns, consequences, and connectivities, and an ability to organize in this context.

3.4.4 Nourishing alternative organizational arrangements

The existence of a viable alternative also undermines the hegemony of existing structures. This aspect of the movement’s strategy is captured by the contrast between the movement slogan ‘(an)other world(s) is possible’ and Margaret Thatcher’s slogan ‘there is no alternative’. Prefiguration in the alterglobalization movement is not ‘cultural’ or inwardlooking toward the movement. It is not motivated by a cultural ideal of building their own community. Prefiguration is outward-looking with the political goal of transforming governing structures on a global scale and showing people through doing that this is possible.

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Nourishing alternative organizational discourses and practices requires imagining new social relations; new social relations, constitutive of and constituted by new discourses and practices, which improve the individual experience of being organizing and, in so doing,

enhance collective responsiveness. This is a complex, strategic choice which requires more than an orientation of tactics towards a final goal and in examples selected for previous discussion has shown it to be almost indivisible from confronting current organizational discourses and practices. Maeckelbergh (2011) argues that a prefigurative strategy does not—and cannot—allow for any distinction between activists and wider society. Activists do not assume responsibility for bringing major structural change, and society does not accept structural change simply on the basis of individual and collective benefit. The strategic choice, instead, is to continue to confront any artificial line dividing activist and society (e.g. Trott, 2005); in terms of nourishing alternative organizational discourses and practices, there is no privileged agent of social change. Individuals must assume responsibility for embodying the change they desire, and for helping others to achieve what they desire, whether they desire the same things or not. This further entwines both streams of prefigurative action (confronting current arrangements and nourishing alternatives), requiring of them simultaneity and made possible through connectivity, where connectivity is communication characterised by ‘reciprocal contamination’ (Maeckelbergh, 2011: 14).¹⁴ This obviates the critical melancholy—of which we are warned by Gibson-Graham (2006)—who claims we risk over-attending to critiques of current organizational discourses and practices. Reciprocal contamination meets with prefiguration in organizing for alterity. And, we might observe both conceptions in those acts of resistance from which are imagined new discourses and practices that emphasise organizing people equally, constructing social structures equitably, and sharing resources responsibly.

Parker, et al. (2014) identify three important principles about the alterity we might seek to imagine: these principles relate to a sense of individual autonomy, collective solidarity, and shared responsibility. Previous discussion revealed the extent to which confronting current organizational discourses and practices often overlapped with nourishing alternative ones. The reverse is also true. And, in the discussion which follows, the principles of the alterity we might seek to nourish emerge from a wide range of critiques of current organizational discourses and practices. They are not principles in the sense of being a transcendent truth, instituted and policed by language and law. But, rather, they are principles which are akin to ‘orientations, values, and logics’ (Parker, et al., 2014: 36), that characterise a

¹⁴ Maeckelbergh (2011) explains that reciprocal contamination means that as well as exchanging ideas and actions, we also look at the world with “other” eyes with the hope of breaking down “otherness”, by developing new ideas and new actions.

commitment to strategy and adventure; thus, producing differences, and the effects of differences, rejecting current discourses and practices of organizing, and unlocking discursive and practicable possibilities. Recognising the ubiquity of these principles—and the broad, underlying contextual critiques from which they emerge—this chapter now considers different responses made to nourishing alternative organizational discourses and practices. I deal with each of the three in turn, identifying examples of the alterity nourished, in the first instance, by autonomy; and, subsequently, by solidarity, and responsibility.

3.4.4.1 Nourishing individual autonomy

Conceptions of autonomy are found in in most conventional political philosophies (Mill, 1859; Nozick, 1974) although exactly how they become constituted in the discourses and practices of each political and, thus, each organizational system is complex and contested. For the purposes of this thesis, autonomy is conceptualised in terms of respect shown to the individual. It might be captured elsewhere as liberty, diversity, dignity, and difference, but I argue its overriding gesture is towards a radical aesthetic that holds that the notion of individual freedom matters. Individuals have the right to exercise choices over their work and life. Confronting current organizational discourses and practices in which work and life choices are restricted, and in which individual autonomy is devalued, builds critiques which challenge organizational intolerance of difference. So, despite the prevalence of competitive individualism within current organizational discourses and practices, autonomy has a radical potentiality worthy of inspiring organizing for alterity.

Individual autonomy is nourished in different ways. Improving the individual experience of being organized is approached corollary to enhancing collective responsiveness. In confronting the compelling evidence that hierarchical authority is poorly suited to the task of coordinating complex interdependent work (Appelbaum and Batt, 1994; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994b; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Thompson, 1967) scholarship explores mechanisms other than hierarchical authority to facilitate coordination between individuals across boundaries (Faraj and Xiao, 2006; Gittell and Douglass, 2012; Kellogg et al., 2006; Okhuysen and Bechky, 2009). That said, many studies examine contexts where hierarchical authority could still be relied upon when needed, such as in cases of conflict or disagreement. Much less is known about whether (and how) complex, emergent coordination can be accomplished in contexts where managerial authority has been eliminated altogether (Foss and Dobravska, 2015; Okhuysen and Bechky, 2009). Existing

research highlights the centrality of peer influence for fostering control in self-managed teams (Barker, 1993) and because information technologies have played a role in enabling coordination across distances (Hinds and Bailey, 2003; Sole and Edmondson, 2002), technology may play a role in enabling peer-to-peer (rather than hierarchical) control at scale. Still, conflicts and crises tend to lead to centralisation and concentration of authority (Edmondson and Smith, 2006; Pfeffer and Leblebici, 1973; Staw, et al., 1981).

The alternative approaches offer greater insight into the challenge of nourishing individual autonomy. Syndicalism, for example, is a working-class movement which confronts both capitalism and the state; its ultimate goal being to reconstruct society with a loose, decentralised federation of worker-owned and worker-managed production units (Jessop, 2017). This approach nourishes the role of the individual—though from the perspective of the irreconcilable interests of employee and employer—with a similar energy in this endeavour to the focus of open source organizing. O’Mahony and Ferraro (2007) report the case of *Linux* which reveals how a community producing collective goods governs itself; the authors describe the centrality of the individual, and the democratic mechanisms put in place to share, experiment, and shift conceptions of authority. Anarchism, cooperativism, and self-help groups elevate the voluntary nature of individual autonomy, emphasising a move away from structured subordination of current discourses and practices. Stamm, et al. (1995: online) writes that, within anarchism, individuals ‘can voluntarily cooperate to meet everyone’s needs, without bosses or rulers, and without sacrificing individual liberties.’ Cooperatives—conceptualised as set along ‘a broad continuum from utopian idealized organizations to unrealistic departures from conventional capitalist businesses’ (Webb and Cheney, 2014: 71)—are underpinned by a set of values and principles, including voluntary and open membership. In this way, cooperatives nourish equality, equity, mutual self-help, democracy, and solidarity; and gold plate individual values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others amongst its members. Like self-help groups, anarchist and cooperativist approaches to organizing privilege the individual who is engaged in its processes; this participatory, collectivist agenda nourishes a new social value amongst individuals building cohesion and community (Chatterton, 2010; Edley, et al., 2004).

3.4.4.2 Nourishing collective solidarity

Notions of collective solidarity can be observed in alternative approaches to organizing; for example, in new social movements. Social movements confront membership—as an

organizational norm within formal organizations—and challenges the extent to which membership is latent, contested, or unclear (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010). Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015) call for closer inspection of these looser social collectives. Online communities (Garud, et al., 2008; O’Mahony and Ferraro, 2007; Puranam et al., 2014), hacker collectives (Coleman, 2014; Scott, 2013), and terrorist networks (Comas, et al., 2015; Schoeneborn and Scherer, 2012, Stohl and Stohl, 2011) are amongst those alternative sites where current practices are broadened to include also looser, networked, and even “boundaryless” social arrangements (Ashkenas, et al., 2002). This emphasises organizations not as static entities demanding of study, but as iterations of the enactment of new social relations; as constitutive of that continual process of “becoming” (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015) present a study of *Anonymous*, a collective lacking membership (in a formal sense) but which a strong sense of the collective drawing from an extensive pool of supporters who tend to remain unknown to both other insiders and outsiders (Coleman, 2014; Olson, 2012; Scott, 2013). Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015: 1030) conclude that organization is a precarious accomplishment ‘that needs to be repeatedly reinstated through the performance of certain . . . acts . . . and their attribution to an overarching organizational address’. Amongst horizontal social relations of social movements (Bakker, et al., 2017), jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise in cooperatives (Webb and Cheney, 2014), the new social value and relationship building found within collectivist approaches (Barnard, 2011) a set of discourses and practices are nourished which redefine the terms in which individuals become collectives. Indeed, the terms in which individuals are conceptualised are confronted by feminist and queer discourses, relying on direct and indirect action in traditional and alternative settings, to prefigure new interpersonal and intrapersonal relations (D’Emilio, 2016; Hyde, 2018).

3.4.4.3 Nourishing shared responsibility

Mainstream conceptions of responsibility are often allied with shareholder theorisings of organizing. Friedman (1970: online), writing in *The New York Times Magazine*, and referencing his book *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962), opines: ‘there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.’ This perspective constructs a mainstream organizational legacy which is focused on how shareholder value can benefit the owners of an organization financially, rather than offering any clear measure of social

issues like employment, environmental issues, or ethical business practices. Questions pertaining to responsibility—such as what is business for, and what contribution does it make to society (Handy, 2002)—have long been asked, if not answered. And, the nature of the social and economic responsibility of organization has experienced a phenomenal rise to prominence (Crane, et al., 2008) which has enriched discourses of responsibility. Davis (1973: 312) argues for responsibility ‘beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements of the firm’, whilst it is further articulated as the obligation to respond to wider market conditions (Salazar and Husted, 2008), to deliver a measurable social objective (Dunfee, 2008), and to recognise its innate political dimension (Scherer and Palazzo, 2008). Debates about the nature of responsibility have engaged in the technical specificities (of what organizations should do), and undertaken normative exercises (to establish what organizations should be responsible for in society), whilst considering if and how the ideological framing of organizing should be directed to restrain organizational power (Marens, 2004). Parker, et al, (2014: 38) argue that responsibility should press us ‘to think about all sorts of consequences’ and consider ‘the sorts of people we create, and the sort of organizational arrangements that they make, and that make them’. This engenders a broader perspective on responsibility which is indicative of alternative approaches to organizing. Cato (2014: 228) describes responsibility as rising above self-interest, indicating the individuals should ‘make decisions in the interest of the society they are part of.’ Whilst some have regarded it corporate social responsibility as a management trend, others have approached it as a framework of “soft regulation” that makes new demands of organizations, whilst others present it as a way for corporate actors to assist in social and economic development (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006). Extensive critiques of organizational attempts to appropriate discourses of responsibility and the corollary institutionalisation of corporate social responsibility (e.g. Banerjee, 2008; Devinney, 2009) suggest a link between individual autonomy, collective solidarity, and shared responsibility which befits much fuller attention.

The nature of responsibility has been underpinned by competing demands of financial profits, political performance, social demands, and ethical values (Garriga and Melé, 2004). In so much as it concerns our individual and collective relationship with the future, responsibility might be thought of in terms of those conditions which are constitutive of, and constituted by, our ability to flourish. Organizing for alterity offers a chance to re-place responsibility in organizational discourses and practices. Land and King (2014: 927) discuss how responsibility is re-placed in the context of anarchism. They describe its focus ‘on

constituting organizational processes that support autonomy and direct action, rather than disempowering individuals and groups by placing responsibility and authority in the hands of a small, organizational elite’.

The commons might be a powerful conception for re-placing responsibility in the relationship between individual and collective. Most of us are born into a set of practices (a commons shared by carers, custodians, families and friends) and experience in our wider lives a social metabolism that is based on the production, preservation and use of communal goods and services (Linebaugh, 2008). Implicit in the commons is, quite simply, ‘a plurality of people (a community) sharing resources and governing them and their own relations and (re)productive processes through horizontal doing in common’ (De Angelis, 2017: 10). The commons models how individuals might become collective, to organize for the advancement of shared, long-term benefit by challenging those deeply embedded assumptions of neo-liberal capitalism which privilege the leveraging of common resource for short-term and highly individualised gain. Further examples of how responsibility is treated by alternative approaches to organizing might be observed in libertarian communism. In this context, it is understood that a truly equal society cannot be a society where economic exploitation persists or where there is any form of class rule (Brecher, 2014). Central to libertarian communist discourses and practices is a commitment to full common ownership. Commoning traverses the individual and the collective and unveils new possibilities of social relationships which support and sustain not just the collective, but the relationships and responsibilities that emanate from the collective.

In nourishing common ownership, ecological approaches connect with systems thinking to institute the individual as a participant in natural (and human-made) ecosystem. It is systems thinking, conjoint with inspiration to a new set of theoretical resources, which inspires transformational organizing (and, as will be explored throughout the thesis, in Teal organizing). The iterative processes of transformational organizing (Scharmer, 2009) are embraced to conceptualise “presencing”: a conflation of presence and sensing which indicates a heightened state of attention. Scharmer’s *Theory-U* is a phenomenological practice that can be used by individuals and collectives to break past patterns of behaviour that lead to ineffective decision making. Scharmer’s work has been modelled and advanced in the context of developing organizing praxis amongst current and future leaders. It makes a number of claims: to link leaders (and, crucially, leadership) with the results of their work; to deliver processes of whole system integrated planning; to integrate innovation within

organizing; to inform and integrate policy making; to connect individual and organizational development; and to operate as a social technology that contributes to either or both conflict resolution and social engineering. Critical scrutiny of settings such as that occupied by *Theory-U* has been limited (Gunnlaugson, 2013). Heller (2018: 17) opines that it is ‘short of understanding real world complexity and matching widely acknowledged academic standards’, though he acknowledges it has ‘the potential to be transformed into a rather useful approach’ to organizing. Applications of these ideas (e.g. a regional healthcare project in Germany, a cross-sectoral project for collective action on HIV and AIDS in Zambia, and corporate applications for *Hewlett Packard*, *Royal Dutch Shell*, *Daimler*, *Fuji*, and *PricewaterhouseCoopers*) offer possibilities for empirical research. Yet, Scharmer’s work is representative of approaches to organizing for alterity that sit on the periphery of critical attention, suffering from persistent claims of philosophical muddling and complaints of defying academic convention. A number of different approaches¹⁵ might be considered in the same breath as Theory U; each occupying similar ground, claiming legitimacy through their adoption by a range of small organizations and some divisions of much larger organizations; but without, as yet, a large corpus of critical attention.

3.5 Becoming alterity

The socio-economic patterns we live in are deadly. Some kind of systemic overhaul is needed. But we cannot erase what has come before. There can be no return to an imaginary blank canvas, or status quo ante. Whatever bitterness has brewed between nations, generations, and ethnic groups will weaken their future.

Nora Bateson (2016: 165–166)

Bloch’s ontology of the Not-Yet-Being is central to how I conceive of alterity. The “alternative” cannot be predetermined; alterity possesses a fundamental element of indeterminacy which allows for development, novelty, invention, and genuinely different outcomes. This is a practical way in which socio-economic patterns can be overhauled; as Bateson (2016: 165) argues, ‘we cannot erase what has come before’. To conclude this chapter, I briefly rehearse the importance of the Not-Yet-Being to organizational becoming and highlight the immanence of the Not-Yet-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Become for organizing for alterity.

¹⁵ In this genre of approaches to alternative organizing, I consider: Laloux’s work on Teal Organizations (2014), Robertson’s model of Holacracy (2015), Agile/Scrum Methodologies (Rigby, et al., 2016), and B-Corporations (Kim, et al., 2016).

3.5.1 Organizational becoming

Whilst scholars acknowledge the important distinction between organizing and organizations it can, in some contexts, appear more than a little blurred (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011). Nonetheless, this is an important distinction to make in the context of this thesis, because the research position I inhabit regards organizing as a process of organizational becoming. A rich body of literature within organizational studies addresses processes and responds to questions about how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time (Langley, et al., 2013). Its empirical focus on evolving phenomena, and its theorising (that considers temporal progressions of activities as elements of explanation and understanding) is explored, for example, in a special edition of *Academy of Management Journal*. Contributions detail how process motivates work on transformation, reproduction, and emergence of institutions (Lok and De Rond, 2013), practices (Gehman, et al., 2013) and identities (Howard-Grenville, et al., 2013), the social construction of cognitive schemas (Bingham and Kahl, 2013), changing interactions between organizations and their environments (MacKay and Chia, 2013), and the dynamics of innovation and learning (Bruns, 2013). From this perspective, organizations are conceptualized as in a continuous state of becoming; they are never “things made”, only ever “things in the making” (Hernes and Weik, 2007). By framing organizing as ‘a continual process of becoming, in which practices reconstruct the organization on a recurrent basis but also provide the grounds for its modification’ (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008: 1392), organizations cannot be fixed entities; they are collection of human beings (Selznick, 1957) more appropriately identified as unfolding enactments.

This is underpinned by two ontological assumptions. Firstly, that organization ‘is an emergent property . . . a temporary pattern constituted by and shaped from micro-interactions among actors, situated in their every-day work’ (Thomas, et al., 2011: 22). Organization, thus, is only ever a temporary outcome of organizing (Weick, 1995); its outcome, organizations, are ‘quasi-stable structures . . . sites of human action’ (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 580). In those micro-interactions among organizing actors, it is possible to observe how individuals ‘reweave their webs of beliefs and habits of action in response to local circumstances and new experiences’ whilst others ‘influence and intervene into the stream of organizational actions’ (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 580). This contextual reweaving of principles and practices characterises the dynamics of organizing, signalling a recognition of the situated cognitive, political, and cultural dynamics of becoming (Pettigrew, 1992).

Secondly, that organizing is contingent upon language. ‘Organizational structures and processes are held in place through language, whereas changes in patterns of organizing depend upon new language, the meaning of which is negotiated among actors in their communicative interactions’ (Thomas, et al., 2011: 22). Organizations are as enacted in the context of communicative interactions among individuals (Boden, 1994; Weick, et al., 2005). As such, the focus of organizing resides in ‘ongoing authoring acts situated in everyday work’ (Carlsen, 2006: 132). The language of communicative interactions is a generative mechanism through which the collective actions (Hardy, et al., 2005) and discursive coordination (Gergen and Gergen, 2004) that enact organizations are achieved (Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Robichaud, et al., 2004). This requires that meaning is co-constructed by individual actors through dialogue that is productive (Tsoukas, 2009) or generative (Gergen and Gergen, 2004), and permeated by power-resistance relations (Thomas, et al., 2011). Organizational becoming thus offers a powerful lens for the study of principles and practices of organizing for alterity. It demands a focus on those moments when becoming occurs: ‘when two (or more) heterogeneous elements (each already multiple) come together and transform each other’ (Clegg, et al., 2005: 159).

3.5.2 Organizing the future

To argue that the “alternative” cannot be predetermined, and that alterity possesses a fundamental indeterminacy which allows for development, novelty, invention, and genuinely different outcomes I draw on the idea that ‘[w]e live surrounded by possibility, not merely by presence’ (Bloch, 1968: 281). Geoghegan (1996: 145) argues that ‘it is only the future tense that energises Bloch’. It is precisely this that enables him to focus so much of his attention on future possibilities, emblematised in the phenomenon of utopianism, and to dismiss realist critiques of utopianism on the grounds that reality is itself incomplete Bloch (1954, 1955, 1959). Bloch’s concepts (e.g. Not-Yet, novum, latency) draw us grammatically towards the future. Bloch sees potentiality in the Not-Yet, which is always in the future whilst also being at work in the present. This enriches the distinction we might make between organizations and organizing. Organizations are Not-Yet: they are unfinished—they are worked on in the present though their completion lies in the future. And it is organizing that exists in the present—this represents work taking place in, and on, organizations. It might be helpfully appended that Bloch is not imagining a future anterior (Badiou, 1988) because the future anterior is a “will have become” not a “will become”.

The Blochian perspective operates not in the certainty of a predetermined outcome (“will have”) but in the excitement of potential outcomes (“will”). And, if we desire social change, then it is organizing (not organization) that represents our opportunity for development, novelty, invention, and genuinely different outcomes in the name of alterity; though our goal cannot be to institute a new real (e.g. to predetermine what “will have” become) but to reveal potentiality (e.g. to excite about the possibilities of what “will” become). As statements of alternative organizing, it is those approaches that share a prefigurative ethos (and which have been discussed in the latter half of this chapter) that engage most powerfully with the Not-Yet.

4. A research methodology: storying the discovery

Research methodology is concerned with a set of deliberations within a philosophical realm, which establish 'our identity and the standards by which we wish our work to be judged' (Hine, 2005: 8). Through these deliberations, the research must negotiate a set of epistemological presuppositions, ontological entailments, and their implications for learning, knowing, and making claims (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Consistent with the theoretical frame developed in previous chapters, the deliberations in this chapter wrestle with organizing for alterity. In the context of organizing, alterity challenges many common assumptions of linearity and rationality (Lanzara, 1998) which impact our relationship with the unknown and the unexpected. The unknown and the unexpected become recast as elements of surprise—experienced at an individual level, yet a product of collective experience—which provide 'a window on presupposition' (Bruner, 1986: 46) and prompt researcher reflexivity (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). This installs an expectation that is derived from an ontological reality which is socially constructed and (re)produced in daily interactions among different social actors (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) rather than emanating from expectations grounded in actual, incontrovertible truth.

For a thesis based on a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, the underlying belief is in the centrality of human-to-human (or social) relations. The system of meaning-making which shapes the conceptual frame, research design and practice, analysis and representation, is infused with a sense of needing other humans in order to be human in one's self. Yet, at the same time, to embrace the solidarity of human-to-human relations seems (at least in part) to reject the first principle of the alterity we might seek to imagine: individual autonomy. Solidarity demands us to release some of the ideas built up around individual autonomy in order to nourish organizational discourses and practices which acknowledge the importance of the collective, and of taking seriously our duties to others. Solidarity draws on communist, socialist, and communitarian discourses and practices to emphasise our individual dependency on the collective. This solidarity might be (re-)imagined through the language of co-operation, community and equality, to the dual effect of describing the nature of our individual humanity and prescribing the discourses and practices which prefigure alternative social relations.

Under this lens, a Blochian ontology enables me to conceive of the alterity as Not-Yet-Being. Slavoj Žižek describes this Not-Yet-Being as a ‘reality not yet fully ontologically constituted, immanently pointing toward its future’ (Thompson and Žižek, 2013: xvi). It is an ontology which is also rooted in objective possibility, for which the most pregnant form of the utopian function is grounded in ascending forces of the age (Geoghegan, 1996). Bloch’s reformulation and development of Marx’s concept of praxis—the unity of theory and practice—advances the possibility of a concrete utopia. In being both the goal and the creation of that goal, Bloch’s conception of concrete utopia is redolent with overtones of prefiguration. In pursuing concrete utopia, Bloch seeks to redefine the best elements of abstract utopia (and remove what he calls the dross of contemporary abstraction). This becomes our pathway to producing *docta spes* (educated hope) which, in turn, becomes an intellectual and material force in the production of possibilities (Levitas, 1990). In the context of this thesis, such possibilities lie in the intellectual and material force of organizing for alterity.

The chapter is presented in three main sections. In section **4.1**, I outline the context and rationale for the research design and its strategy, and supplement this with a discussion of digital research methods. In section **4.2**, I present the practical stages of data (co-)creation, collection, and curation, and their associated methods and techniques. Then, in section **4.3**, I consider the principles of interpreting and interpenetrating data (Kozinets, 2015) through a discussion of the analytical and representational challenges of humanist-leaning netnography. This is a forward-looking act, not just in developing ethnographic inquiry for the digital world, but in pushing and pulling at our attempts at learning, knowing, and making claims. In seeking to understand the data today (with the prospect of building on that understanding tomorrow) I proceed on the basis of seeking to conclude though not necessarily seeking to resolve (Ricœur, 1984). And, in proceeding on that basis, the thesis must negotiate reality and expectation. In respect of that, Weick and Sutcliffe (2001: 34) offer words which forewarn of a necessary caution: ‘all of us tend to be awfully generous in what we treat as evidence that our expectations are confirmed’. So, whilst this thesis negotiates reality and expectation—and this chapter presents a processual account of the research strategy and the different steps taken towards its realisation—it carries with it a corollary intent. This thesis intends to abstract and discuss the impact of ongoing methodological deliberations, to evaluate them alongside pertinent ethical considerations. As a result, the limitations of this study, and ethics of the project, as well as researcher

reflexivity are addressed throughout the thesis rather than being regarded as separate topics.

4.1 Research design and strategy

At the heart of this section on research design is the necessity to orientate the reader towards the pathway taken throughout this research. In doing this, I incorporate a discussion of the rationale and context for the research, which locates netnography within the broader context of the development of anthropology and ethnography. This, in turn, connects with wider debates on digital research methods.

4.1.1 Rationale and context

Amongst organizational scholars, the common focus on “organizations” makes a set of structural assumptions about the outcomes of organizing that do not really reflect my experience of the world. Consequently, I have become fascinated by heterodox approaches to organizing. This began towards the end of my MBA studies, where I repeatedly ran into difficulty with many of the managerial remedies that were prescribed for organizational ailments. I found the command and control paradigm to lack the necessary sophistication for multiple interpretations of the modern world. And so, I became drawn towards a more critically oriented body of scholarship. This has led me to adopt a research focus on “organizing” in the context of “alterity”. Consequently, I negotiate a diverse set of approaches to organizing grounded in a plurality of conceptual and theoretical materials.

4.1.2 Research aims and objectives

As identified in the introduction, the research addresses questions pertaining to the principles and practices of organizing for alterity. Developed from work constructing the thesis’ theoretical frame, four research objectives are identified to frame the research design and deliver its stated aims.

- 1) To review extant literature pertaining to “new organizational forms” and the more critically-oriented “alternative organizations”.
- 2) To systematically collect, curate, and analyse data—namely, archival, participant observation, interview, and reflective fieldnote data—(co-)created through netnographic study of #AlteritOrg.

- 3) To present a compelling articulation of the principles and practices of “organizing for alterity” as encountered through the discourses and practices of the members of #AlteritOrg.
- 4) To contribute to knowledge—developed through grounded theorising—about the principles and practices of organizing for alterity.

The research’s aims and objectives have been guided and shaped by netnography, a qualitative digital research methodology based in participant-observation (Kozinets, 2015). Netnographers employ a specific set of online ethnographic procedures which respond to changing social constructs (Quinton and Reynolds, 2018; Rokka, 2010). They combine archival and online communications work, participation and observation, with new forms of digital and network data collection, analysis, and research representation (Costello, et al., 2017; Kozinets and Nocker, 2018; Lindgren, 2017). Kozinets (2015), the originator of the methodology, offers two pieces of advice to researchers planning a netnography. Firstly, minimise the intrusiveness of your own participation; and, secondly, assume that the participants in your study are superior to you in their knowledge of their own conduct.

This thesis details my experience as a participant-observer. It chronicles my attempts to minimise my intrusiveness as a researcher, and to allow my learning to be led by those superior in knowledge. Vaus’ (2001: 9) instruction, ‘to ensure the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible’, commits me to a research design that accommodates evaluation of multiple bodies of knowledge, the curation and analysis of data, and the storied (re)construction of findings which deepen understanding about the principles and practices of organizing for alterity. I address these commitments throughout the course of this chapter; however, the extent to which this evidence is “unambiguous” may be considered just as elusive as the extent to which Geertz (1973: 29) considers all analysis to be ‘intrinsically incomplete’. I have resisted the temptation to look for, or build, the perfect alternative organization. The field of study can never be complete, not least because of organizing’s dynamic and fluid qualities; indeed, organizational studies catalogues how yesterday’s alternative can quickly become the mainstream of today. Instead, I have looked for aspects or dimensions of alterity and, I have adopted caution to the claims I make about the transferability or generalisability of any example of organizing for alterity (in much the same way as we would across nations, cultures, and ethnic groups).

4.1.3 An anthropological lineage

Netnography is often presented as an adaptation of ethnography, a framework which has long been associated with deep, longitudinal, anthropological research that produces thick descriptions of cultures and groups (Geertz, 1973). Anthropological and sociological study has continually responded to changing constructs, and with the advent of computer-based communicative technologies, researcher attention has turned to focus on constructs of online community and online culture (or cyberculture). However, as research in this field has developed, culture and community have become particularly unstable conceptually, especially when used to reference online phenomena (Lindgren, 2017; Rogers, 2013). Netnography is one of those responses to changing constructs. Anthropological and sociological study has also responded to contested and shifting notions of community and culture (Amit and Rapport, 2002). Miller and Horst (2012: 29) warn of 'how things become rapidly mundane'; the response of the netnographer is to take as given the 'fluidity and instability of the human social realm' (Kozinets, 2015: 83) and recognise that research practices must be attuned to that.

Kozinets (2015: 10) writes:

Culture adapts quickly to new technologies and becomes technoculture perhaps because it is always in liquid motion, transforming and transformative. When studying online interaction, we surely wish to identify clear cultural categories such as nationalities, ethnicities, localisms, religiosities, and occupational identities. However, we must strive to view them less as solid states of being than as liquid interactional elements that individual members bring to life as mental meanings.

Selecting a netnographic research design tacitly acknowledges the belief that those ethnographic tales of reified, holistic, discrete, internally-integrated, ontologically-secure society and culture as things-in-themselves are outdated (Van Maanen, 2011b), and adopts a position which identifies cultures and communities as animated, borne, maintained, mutated, dispersed, and transformed by individual consciousnesses (Kozinets, 2015). It is, however, not a voyeur's charter; nor is it a one-way suctioning of data. Instead, it is incumbent upon the netnographer to observe, participate in, reflect on, and describe—in a creative way—those emerging cultural memes and consocialities that arise as we digitise more and more of our lives. The participatory nature of the research makes significant demands on the researcher. Kozinets (2017: 374) describes the 'anthropological preoccupation with the human level of social experience' that casts netnography as a radical empiricist technique in that it draws entirely on the direct experience of the

researcher ‘for the purpose of gaining understanding, as well as personal and social transformation and betterment’. This, more than ever, extends to how we conceptualise organizing, how we perform organizing, and how we experiment with different principles and practices such as are borne out in (and by) different organizational processes and structures.

4.1.4 Digital research methods

Marres (2012) describes how researchers can adopt an open or closed stance on the use and application of digital technologies for research, depending on the level of optimism or pessimism they feel towards new possibilities of discovery. For Quinton and Reynolds (2018: 9), ‘digital research will, potentially, place a researcher on less stable ground owing to the perceived newness of the terrain’; however, these scholars regard digital research as an important choice worthy of careful consideration, regardless of philosophical position. Kozinets (2015: 84) claims that netnography ‘faithfully exports anthropology’s set of ontological, epistemological, and axiological commitments to the study of online social experience’. Indeed, the rise of “networked individualism” represents a shift in people’s social experiences ‘away from the densely knit family, neighbourhood, and group relationships, toward more far-flung, less tight, more diverse personal networks’ (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 12); a shift which is driven by technology and the expansion of reality to include the local and the translocal (Rokka, 2010). In recognising the fluidity of online cultures and communities, it is possible to move to a position which recognises consociality: a quasi-abandonment of ascribed identity boundaries, in favour of a coming together around what we share rather than who we are (Sansom, 1980).

I became aware of #AlteritOrg whilst going about my own life online. It identifies as a community of practice (Wenger, 2000) and is comprised of over 1,000 members who are drawn together by a shared interest in organizing for alterity. The members are organizational experts, working professionally in the field of organizational development and transformation; they assemble freely in #AlteritOrg, to support each other, without any financial reward or remuneration.¹⁶ The nature of the community of practice is developed in literature to refer to groups of people who ‘genuinely care about the same real-life problems or hot topics, and who on that basis interact regularly to learn together and from

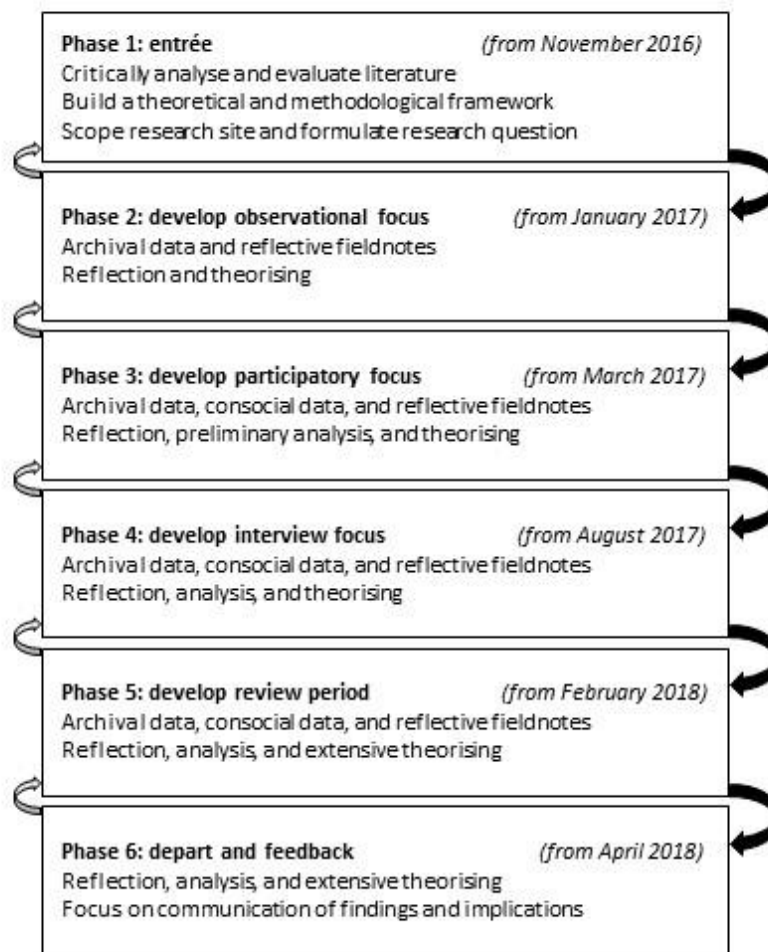
¹⁶ The fact that there was no financial reward for participation in the community often surprised people when I spoke about #AlteritOrg. I find the empirical work by Jensen (2018) useful in developing these ideas: “People can’t believe we exist!”.

each other' (Pyrko, et al., 2017: 390). Although integrating communities of practice into specific organizational settings has proved challenging (Swan et al., 2002; Waring and Currie, 2009), and whilst Pyrko, et al. (2017: 390) share a broad scepticism as to whether communities of practice can be 'intentionally cultivated', research carried out into the learning processes that lead to the development of communities of practice suggest there is merit to be had from their further development within organizations (e.g. Gherardi et al., 1998; Handley et al., 2006; Kuhn and Jackson, 2008). The nature of #AlteritOrg, as a community of practice, made it clear that a participative methodology was highly desirable because mutual engagement is an essential element of these social structures; and, to access an online research site, a digital methodology was essential. Netnography was selected, as a digital adaptation of ethnography, to engage with the wide-ranging discussion about the individuals' experiences of organizing for alterity.

4.1.5 A schematic representation

Participant-observation is central to netnographic study and sits as an interface between archival and interview data. It represents a central source of human research intelligence. In Figure 4.i, below, I present a schematic representation of the research design: it illustrates how participant-observation inhabits phases 2 and 3, but effectively permeates the entirety of the research experience. It is important that the schematic representation of the research design is not seen as a simple, linear passage through time. It is iterative, non-linear, and distinctly imperfect, in pursuit of a deepened understanding about a body of knowledge which is itself spread across multiple disciplines and centred on contested conceptualisations which ultimately lend themselves to highly individualised and contextually negotiated interpretations.

Fig. 4.i A schematic representation of the research design.



4.2 (Co-)creating, collecting, and curating data

This section explores how data is (co-)created, collected, and curated, and illustrates how the research design allows for multiple encounters with data at different stages of the research. I prefer to identify data as having been (co-)created (rather than simply created)—the data I encounter had independent life and meaning prior to my labelling it as data; it is not, therefore, an act of creation, but of (co-)creation.¹⁷ It is a living story of data in which I share. Subsequently, I detail how my research design responds to the five archetypal practices of netnography—with specific reference to the demands of participant-observation, and its framing by archival data work and interviews.

¹⁷ A recent conversation encouraged me to reconsider the distinction I made between data and information. From an opposite perspective, the data could be argued to already exist; it is my research decision, however, to label it as data. I will keep this distinction under review.

4.2.1 This thing called data

In netnography, data flows from an inductive stream, punctuated by the occasional startling moment of abductive clarity.

Robert Kozinets (2015: 162)

We are surrounded by pieces of information that have the potential to become data: ‘content, messages, communications, interactions, observations, notes, reflections, daydreams, bits, magnetic blips’ (Kozinets, 2015: 161) all, to a certain extent, have independent life and meaning. But, as researchers, we can ascribe to them new life and refresh their meaning. Netnographic data is both deep and wide; drawing, as it does, on interactions with others, interactions with things, a nascent network of connections, and intense introspection to draw the dataset together into what can only be presented as an individualised story which—whilst being technologically-mediated—has been assembled by human intelligence. The process, or ritual, by which we assemble evidence of life and meaning within our research setting doesn’t create data in any proprietorial way, but (co-)creates data, through a series of meaningful social interactions. All number of things constitute data for the netnographer, and, in analysis, the data inevitably becomes coloured—both deliberately and consciously—by the human perspective of the researcher.

My data (co-)creation, collection, and curation strategy sets out to achieve three things: firstly, to ‘provide an accurate atmospheric overview’ (Kozinets, 2015: 164) of the researched environment; secondly, to contribute to knowledge by uncovering inconsistencies or gaps; and, thirdly, to offer a ‘human filter of immersion and experience’ (Kozinets, 2015: 164) against the backdrop of which this research can be judged (Hine, 2005). It achieves this through sustained engagement with archival data, data (co-)created through social interactions, and through the keeping of extensive reflective fieldnotes. The process of data (co-)creation, collection, and curation is described in Table 4.ii, below.

Table 4.ii A table showing the strategic intent of data collection, the character of data, and its collection and curation for the purposes of this research.

Strategic intent	Co-creation of data	Collection of data	Curation of data
Provide an accurate atmospheric overview	Survey of archival data: includes articles, blog posts, forum posts and comments, podcasts, text files, photographs, images, AV presentations, other digital artefacts from research site (and to external locations linked from research site).	Focus: Participant-observation work, centring on <i>observation</i> . Open identification of the researcher and nature of the research. Specific acts of: reading and identifying material; searching the research site, and its associated social media platforms, and individual member profiles; exploring a nascent network.	Specific acts of: downloading text-based data, screen-grabbing visual data, recording and transcribing audio data. Storage of data (in accordance with AOIR (2012) and University Research Ethics Committee standards).
Uncover inconsistencies and/or gaps	Living stories developed through consocial interaction: including synchronous and asynchronous text exchanges, technologically-mediated, real-time conversations, face-to-face interviews, attendance at group events related to research sites, webinars, 'community calls', and other acts of 'connecting'.	Focus: Participant-observation work, centring on <i>participation</i> . Continued and open identification of the researcher and nature of the research. Specific acts of: engaging in discussions in comments sections of articles/blog posts, text-based exchanges on forums; engaging in opportunities to connect with members through offline events; interviewing participants.	Specific acts of: downloading text-based data, screen-grabbing visual data, recording and transcribing audio data; writing notes of online and offline events; audio recording of face-to-face interviews for later review, transcription, and analysis. Storage of data (in accordance with AOIR (2012) and University Research Ethics Committee standards).
Offer a human filter to frame data (co-)creation, collection, and curation	Ongoing commitment to reflective fieldnotes: written/taped recorded as close as possible to 'real time', used reflexively to guide, shape, and inform research practice.	Focus on: supplementing participant-observation work with reflective practice to draw on immediate reactions as a prompt for later reflections. Specific acts: thoughts and reflections captured in paper diaries, computer typewritten entries, memos, scribbled diagrams.	Specific acts of: returning regularly to fieldnotes; consolidating formats; revisiting ideas; seeking emergent and/or recurrent themes; space for potential theorising. Storage of data (in accordance with University Research Ethics Committee standards).

Discovering the strange lands of this online research site might be an unusual experience for those grounded in traditional organizational ethnography. Ciuk, et al. (2018: 281) identify organizational ethnography as a 'vibrant strand of research in management studies' which is 'open to change with regards to the "doing", "writing", "thinking" and its "focus"'. Going "on location" with #AlteritOrg has its challenges, and demands attention to how we carry out, think about, write about, and focus our attention on the discourses and practices of the community. #AlteritOrg has no physical front door, and barely any physical infrastructure; a postal address identifies the home of a partner in a modest residential area in London, though this seems to be for essential correspondence only. There is no record of #AlteritOrg sitting with Companies House, nor have I come across any other formal documentation in the time I have been member (and participant-observer). Nonetheless, there is clear evidence of over 1,000 active members—all engaged in the work of #AlteritOrg.

In line with the data collection strategy, I (co-)created three streams of data in and around the research site: the archival data, amounting to a detailed and critical evaluation of the published website materials framed by participant-observation, including discussions generated by articles, and other streams of content sharing; the consocial data, constituted of 42 semi-structured research interviews (each approximately 90-minutes in length) with members of the community of practice; and, the fieldnote data of a reflective practitioner, amounting to a series of written and typed notes narrating the research journey and including prompts for later consideration, reflection, and possible action.

Archival data was collected from the research site (focusing on articles and other posts) and from the social media channels that radiate from the research site (mostly Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). I used the search functions available on different platforms to explore sites, topics, and people, experimenting with different key words, and expressions, to unpick the algorithms which lie beneath. Data was curated using a simple database to capture text, images, key words, and against which I was able to add emergent ideas relating to themes for coding and analysis, or specific learning points which I thought important. By keeping this under review and connecting to the search and critical review of literature, I built a vibrant picture of the landscape in which empirical and theoretical knowledge exists and is developed. It is important to note at this stage that archival data is not free from selection bias and/or observer effects; although I had no hand in the content

of information (co-)created as data, I am responsible for the colours, textures, and composition of the landscape. Keeping close to the themes and trajectories identified in the critical literature helped me retain perspective and keep checking that the data were anti-fragile (Taleb, 2012).

Attention then moved to data (co-)created through consocial interaction, which led to data being (co-)created in interviews. This process drew on sites, topics, and people revealed in the archival data, and engaged with them, drawing out interactions which could contextualise understanding, and enabled me to scrutinise the landscape that I had constructed from data surrounded by empirical and theoretical knowledge. Interactions took multiple forms: comments on blog posts or articles were sometimes responded to by the author, or by others, which led on occasion to further discussion; these discussions sometimes led to further ideas or resources being recommended to me, which I would follow and subject to the same kind of scrutiny; and, where these discussions seemed to reveal important knowledge, understanding, or challenge, I developed them in interviews (discussed later) which—although formally conceived as semi-structured, face-to-face interactions—took varying forms, as most appropriate to the person and their own context. I maintained a research webpage for purposes of ethical transparency, through which a small number of participants made initial contact. They were curious about my research, keen to ask questions, and, in return, eager to share their ideas and experiences. Data was curated using a simple database to capture text, images, key words, and audio recordings (later transcribed) of interviews. This resource was kept under continual review and accessed daily to interact with the data and to explore the interplay that seemed to emerge at different times.

The final stream of data emerges from my commitments to reflexivity as a researcher. I have kept reflective fieldnotes from the start of the research, and they comprise a personal and professional journey through learning and discovery. They amount to a series of aides-memoires which chronicle my first use of netnography, my quest to better understand “organizing for alterity”, my attempts to describe what I have found and theorise on its significance, and my own PhD story. I have captured them—and continue to capture them—in notebooks, in text files, in audio files, and sometimes as doodles on other pieces of work which should—but possibly didn’t—have my full attention. The reflective fieldnotes narrate a research practice and data stream which flows throughout the

netnography, and often are at their most vivid at those moments where ideas intersect, or assumptions fail.

4.2.2 The five archetypal practices of netnography

Kozinets (2015: 243–244) proposes five archetypal practices of netnography. Using these five practices—in Table 4.iii, below—I illuminate the pathway taken through this research. In the sub-sections that follow Table 4.iii, participant-observation, being human online, the nature of online data, my ethical commitment, and human intelligence are further discussed.

Table 4.iii A table showing the five archetypal practices of netnography (Kozinets, 2015) as adopted/adapted for this research.

This research is a netnography, which . . .	In practical terms, this netnographic research . . .	This represents a development of the anthropological tradition, because netnography . . .
. . . involves participant-observation.	. . . uses extensive participant-observation in and around a research site; the ‘passive’ act of observation is combined with the ‘active’ act of participation. Activity centres around reading, sharing, questioning, commenting, discussing, contributing, following links, and embracing the general passage of the medium. The participant-observational work in this research is framed by (i) archival data work and (ii) interviews.	. . . opens online space as potential site for deepening understanding through qualitative, human-focused research. It enables real-time, life-like immersion in online organizations. It also enables synchronous and asynchronous interactions, suitable for adapting to specific human, social, technological, and temporal needs.
. . . seeks to describe and theorize the human element of online human and technological interaction, social interaction, and experience.	. . . acknowledges the place of the researcher in the research. It recognises the way in which data is (co-)created, collected, and curated, through stream of technological and social interactions which include the researcher interacting with archival and communications data across multiple technological platforms.	. . . utilises the relationship between humans and technology to explore data which is often unique to that online space. It enables the co-creation of data and focuses analytic attention on unambiguity. It enables human intervention to shape and check online data collection against human social experience.

... focuses primarily on data collected through the Internet.	... takes as its principal source of data a set of materials co-created and curated from online sources and develops understanding from interviews with participants encountered online and shaped by multiple technologies (including website, e-zine, and the wider Internet, as well as social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).	... negotiates a place for data collected online alongside data collected offline, in keeping with an extension of our shared understanding of consocial reality. It enables materials which originate online to be explored and evaluated, and for technologically mediated interactions to contribute to research and knowledge.
... adheres to strict and widely accepted standards of ethical online research.	... is guided by the guidelines published by the Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR, 2012) and is subject to the University's own code of practice for research involving human participants.	... commits to do no harm (in line with the broad commitments of the anthropological tradition). It enables negotiation of online/offline identities and builds a trustworthiness of the discipline and a respect of data and all who (co-)create it.
... always includes human intelligence and insight as a major, but not always exclusive, part of data analysis and interpenetration.	... (co-)creates, collects, and curates data on a small scale, suitable for human coding and further analytical procedures. It undertakes a process of interpretation/interpenetration which is characteristic of netnography and considers the format of any research output(s).	... frames analysis in seven intellectual interpenetrating elements, which help the researcher move from data to representation. It enables a hermeneutic approach in establishing a trustworthy link between research questions, data, and answers.

4.2.2.1 Participant-observation

Netnography is participant-observational research based in online hanging-out, downloading, reflecting, and connecting . . . and from netnography we extend into all manner of new quantitative and qualitative and combined techniques.

Robert Kozinets (2015: 67)

Netnography, like ethnography, is an inherently assimilative practice. It sits within a methodological terrain which conceptualises qualitative research design as a holistic design, rather than a series of disconnected choices (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Blaikie, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Law, 2004). So, whilst this research is based around participant-observation, it interlinks and, indeed, interplays, with multiple methods in its journey of discovery.

I established a six-month period solely dedicated to participant-observation, a period in which I learned to “follow the data”. Rogers (2009) argues that digital researchers should follow the medium: his instruction empowers researchers to move in and out from the object of study, focussing and refocussing, and ‘to embrace the natural logic the Internet applies to itself to gather, order, and analyse data’ (Caliandro and Gandini, 2016: 62) rather than relying on a priori knowledge. Marcus (1995: 96) describes multi-site ethnography as moving out ‘from the single sites and local situation of conventional ethnographic research design to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in time-diffuse space’. Hine (2015: 15) describes how writing on mobile ethnography—which effectively translates this study of a given object across multiple online settings—is compatible with the ethnographer’s urge to ‘understand the object of enquiry from multiple perspectives’. Rather than reinforcing any artificial distinction between online and offline realities, Caliandro and Gandini (2016: 63) offer the following advice to qualitative researchers in digital environments, which constitutes something of a genetic assemblage: ‘follow the thing, follow the medium, follow the natives’. So, whilst netnographers can have some confidence in the fact that their data collection will centre on participant-observation, quite where that will take them is unknown.

I first entered #AlteritOrg as a “lurker” and spent a three-month period scoping the suitability of the site for research.¹⁸ During this time I surveyed its immediate community and followed multiple pathways that radiate away from and lead back to #AlteritOrg (e.g. social media channels, linked groups, individual member activities). This was a time-consuming process which very quickly crept beyond the hours allocated to it as I became embedded in networks which were instantly accessible through personal technological devices (e.g. my smartphone and tablet). This was a foretaste (unrecognised at the time) of the immersive nature of the method. After this time, and following discussion with colleagues, I revealed myself, explicitly, as a researcher with an interest in organizing for alterity (in their language, “reinventing organizations”) and engaging in participant-observation (Kozinets, 2002). Joining the community (as described in detail later in this thesis) is on the basis on an expectation that members actively participate in its discourses and practices. Gold’s (1958) description of participation types suggests a range of options are available to researchers, with ethnographic practice spanning complete observation to

¹⁸ ‘Netnographers are professional “lurkers”: the uniquely unobtrusive nature of the method is the source of much of its attractiveness and its contentiousness.’ (Kozinets, 2002: 68)

complete participation. A researcher's role may not be static in this continuum and may move as the research progresses and develops and as the researcher negotiates the insider/outsider dimension (Goffman, 1959). In a digitally-enabled research site, all is possible—from complete observation to complete participation. However, observation alone was clearly inadequate for the purposes of membership of the community who expected members to actively participate. So, balancing my place on the spectrum became an important dimension of my reflective practice.

Traditionally, anthropologists immersed themselves in the world of those studied, often for prolonged periods (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This reflects a belief that deep familiarity is required to obtain the best data, achieved by getting emotionally, physically and socially close to the people being studied (Lofland, 1995). At one extreme *complete observation* risks an over-emphasised separation from the observed individuals, whilst at the other extreme, *complete participation* risks “going native”. To balance my place on the participant-observation spectrum, I focused on the range of potential data available to me: my research practice included the daily reading of articles, posts, and comments; following links to resources; and, participating in some conversation with other members. Initially its purpose was to become attuned to the specific themes being discussed and then, as I experienced a move from outsider to insider (Allen, 2004; Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002) I became confident to interrogate the specific principles and practices which were revealed. Coming to understand my place on the participant-observation spectrum revealed that the vast quantity of digital data was a distraction that could trap me in observer mode, especially when the anxiety of first-time engagement held me back from asking questions or contributing my own ideas. Kozinets (2015: 243) is adamant that ‘observational downloads, web-crawling, or data mining are insufficient without researcher participation.’ My own sense, explored in discussions with colleagues, was that I needed to do more to satisfy the spirit of participant-observation. I looked to make specific commitments to participate; this included writing a twice-weekly post, commenting on a greater number of posts and articles that I read, and engaging in longer exchanges with other members. In addition to this, I committed to attending a workshop-conference, which was hosted by a partner organization, at which I explored many of the ideas common to the organization's shared beliefs. And I wrote an article, describing my learning experience of this event, which was published by the research organization and attracted feedback from other members. It was subsequently syndicated and republished by another partner

organization, and further articles were invited for submission. This development revealed that—especially in the later parts of the study when I was firmly established within the community—the ease of access to the research site (through computer and smart-phone technology) meant that the level of contact became overwhelming. Messages and notifications arrived throughout the day and night from around the world. It was at this point, and with a mixture of excitement and exhaustion, that I really felt I had truly begun to experience netnographic participation.

4.2.2.2 Being human online

The data collection strategy of netnography, like ethnography, always centres on the researcher. For an ethnography is the story of a particular place at a particular time inhabited by a particular person who conveys the research. [...] This is also what netnography chronicles, and how it chronicles: stories of our own digital, digitizing, human, and humanizing uses of technoculture and the daily life it constantly changes in every domain . . .

Robert Kozinets (2015: 67)

The idea of following the natives, in a technologically enabled space, combines a little of the physicality of following with the invisibility of technology, such that its ubiquity within twenty-first century living, can play tricks. Technology has not removed any human element of communication. Rather, technology has adopted and adapted the physicality of communication, its temporal and spatial requirements, even if the cognitive trick is of a perceived reduction of visibility. Nonetheless, being human online was a key goal of the research. Costello, et al. (2017: 1) confirm that effective use of netnography ‘as a qualitative methodology relies on the need for human presence and personal connections online’. More than that, even; appropriate human participation is, for Kozinets (2015: 177) ‘non-negotiable’. For me, this fell short of being a physical presence, but it certainly was a metaphysical presence, instituting a central challenge for me not to allow technology to abstract and/or absent myself from the research process. I reflected on Hayles’ (2012: 10) concept of technogenesis: ‘the idea that humans and technics have co-evolved together’, and the extent to which the social (and consocial) force of technology has changed the nature of many of our interactions (Amit and Rapport, 2002). I am motivated to understand more about social, consocial, and technological interaction from a human perspective, so it became necessary to make a strong case for the Internet as an expansion of human reality, and one which decidedly advances the critique of the persistent idea of the Internet as a realm apart (Rogers, 2013).

It is implicit in my research design that the Internet is not a virtual realm apart. Research is carried out, not mediated by rarefied technological devices, but by those everyday technologies that characterise a modern human experience. So embedded, in fact, are the smartphone, the tablet, the computer, in our experience of the modern world that a growing body of academic work seeks to find ways to break free from the coercive control of communicative technologies across work and life spaces in the name of preserving mental health. Data—such as I was (co-)creating—became a living and breathing part of my everyday human existence. For the most part, I enjoyed this; though it came at cost, and at times the mass of data could be overwhelming and exhausting. I would allocate at least three hours each day to following ideas around (and beyond) the research site; this was a time in which I would commit to asking questions of other participants about things that needed clarification, liking or commenting to signal interest, approval, or to note significance, and continually (re-)evaluating the direction that these ideas were leading my own. I should recall that, sometimes, days would pass by without much interaction (which I can reasonably assume mirrors the busy lives of other members of the community) whilst others were swamped with ideas, note-taking, exploration, and discovery. On these occasions, three hours could quickly extend to four, five six hours, and evenings were often punctuated by “pings”, alerting me to different members joining the practice of the community. As I tried to negotiate some semblance of work/life balance, I regularly experienced that weird modern phenomenon which seemed to drag me deeper and deeper into empirical research: FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out).¹⁹

I was struck by Hayles’ observation (2010: 10) that ‘the idea that humans and technics have coevolved together’ which is an important underpinning of Kozinets’ (2015) belief that being human is a deeply personal matter. I wanted to use this research to share my humanity and allow that to contribute to the revealing of the standards by which I wish my work to be judged (Hine, 2005: 8). Every human experience of technological and social interaction is layered with assumptions and implications, and my challenge became to recognise this in the presentation and analysis of data, and in any subsequent claims that are made, to facilitate its reception into a body of knowledge.

¹⁹ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Fomo>

4.2.2.3 The nature of online data

Netnographers use online and mobile data sources for social data to arrive at ethnographic understandings and representations of online social experience.

Robert Kozinets (2015: 67)

Netnography has vast amounts of information at its disposal awaiting appropriation as 'data'. Baym and Markham (2009: xviii) note the 'endless sources of information', and Kozinets (2015: 161) identifies the 'content, messages, communications, interactions, observations, notes, reflections, daydreams, bits, magnetic blips' to which researchers ascribe new life and meaning in construction of an empirical reality. Online and mobile data sources constitute the central dataset (co-)created, collected, and curated within this research; data which otherwise would be unappropriated for the development of knowledge and understanding. These online and mobile data sources are accessed through everyday technological devices, which resonate with the reality of human experience; these devices learn 'online habits' of participants, 'and then cruise in those places' (Kozinets, 2015: 243). My responsibility, through human intelligence, became to select and sort those appropriate data which tell us about the alterity of organizing.

I wanted to consider the nature of online data, and to ascertain its appropriateness for answering research questions. Achieving this lies in a shared and sophisticated understanding of the Internet. The popular conceptualisation of the Internet as a virtual realm arose from much of the discourse surrounding being online and offline in the 1980s and 1990s, and which purportedly offered individuals the opportunity to redefine their consciousness, identity, corporality, community, citizenry, and politics (Benedikt, 1991; Rheingold, 1991; Shaviro, 1998; Turkle, 1995) according to a new set of rules, allied to a new time, place, and space. Kozinets (2015) alludes to this in his discussion of technogenesis (the idea that humans and technologies co-evolve together). It is difficult to continue to make a case for the continuance of cyberspace, and its associated placelessness, as a contemporary conceptual concern. Moreover, it is impossible to make a sustained case for the exclusion of online and mobile data sources for social data; instead, attention needs to be directed to how new forms of data are curated to arrive at ethnographic understandings and representations of online social experience.

However, whilst there has been increasing interest in new forms of digital data and representations of online social experience (Markham and Baym, 2009; Rogers, 2013;

Quinton and Reynolds, 2018), much of the understanding about what constitutes 'quality' still resides in debates which have been carried out in the context of offline qualitative research. Research offers multiple interpretations of offline quality. Notions of credibility (Creswell, 2013), trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), truth (Clifford, 1986), validity, precision, and reliability (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), rigour (Eisenhardt, 1991), verisimilitude (Bruner, 1991), and adequacy (Gioia, et al., 2013), are introduced as conceptual developments to enrich debates about data quality and qualitative inquiry. Rogers (2013) connects these ideas to the wider debate surrounding the ontological distinction made by some researchers between the digital and the digitized. He argues that we must learn from the methods of online devices, repurpose them, and ground claims about cultural change and societal conditions in web data, and introduces the term "online groundedness" to describe that activity of establishing trustworthiness of data gathered online through grounding it in an offline experience. Rogers (2013: 21) argues:

The Internet is employed as a site of research for far more than just online culture. The issue no longer is 'how much of society and culture is online', but rather how to diagnose cultural change and societal conditions by means of the Internet. The conceptual point of departure is the recognition that the Internet is not only an object of study but also a source.

Traditional markers of data quality have been imported, by default, to the context of online qualitative inquiry, but they do not fully address the demands of digital data (Rogers, 2013). Conceptualisations of data quality emerge from shared theoretical commitments, and although Markham and Baym (2009: xvii) argue that we should 'constantly and thoroughly evaluate what will count as data' this scholarly work is far from extensive. Digital data, thus, suffers from 'an overall reputational problem' (Rogers, 2013: 204), which has implications for online qualitative inquiry. Attending to the ontological underpinnings of digital data casts light on how traditional markers of data quality must be considered unstable in the context of online qualitative inquiry, ultimately directing attention to many of those areas in which new conceptual knowledge is required. Silverman (2017: 15) insists that 'qualitative research should offer no protection from the rigorous, critical standards that should be applied to any enterprise concerned to sort "fact" from "fancy"'. Applying rigorous, critical standards in the context of netnography requires an ongoing commitment to attend to the subject(s) and object(s) of study which appear to exist in states of continual flux.

4.2.2.4 An ethical commitment

Over the past ten years, significant amounts of new research and literature have emerged to enlighten our perspective on what constitutes ethical online research and ethical online versions of ethnography, including netnography . . . Full consensus on these matters will probably never exist . . .

Robert Kozinets (2015: 130)

The guidelines proposed by Boellstorff, et al. (2012) are useful guidelines in the ethical conduct of conducting ethnographies in the virtual world; I find them worthy of careful consideration, because of the way netnography imports many of the broad ethical commitments of ethnography and anthropology. Netnography, by definition, may not be as personally consuming as the virtual ethnographies described by Boellstorff, et al. (2012), although Kozinets (2015: 129) identifies that: ‘to “observe” contains its own set of ethical risks, but to be active entails many more because you are visible’. The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) has an ongoing commitment to ethical research on and about the Internet and offers an important reference point for work which touches any online space. This is a contested area, as notions of individual and identity remain fluid, but the general guidelines published by the AoIR (2012) are a vital prompt throughout the research process. I describe, in Table 4.iv, how I adopted and adapted these guidelines in the context of empirical work within #AlteritOrg.

Table 4.iv My adoption/adaption of the general guidelines published by the AoIR Working Committee (2012).

Adoption of AoIR Working Committee Guidelines	Adaption of AoIR Working Committee Guidelines and practical implications for this study
I consider the vulnerability of the community/author/participant and continue to explore my ethical obligations to protect the community/author/participant.	I discussed with participants how they felt about my presence as a researcher. We chatted through the potential outcomes. I explained ‘cloaking’ (Kozinets, 2009) as a commitment to protecting their anonymity.
I acknowledge that ‘harm’ is defined contextually, so that ethical principles are more likely to be understood inductively rather than applied universally.	I discussed with participants how they felt my research (both in terms of process and outcome) could affect them. We spoke about concerns of participants active in both mainstream and alternative settings.
All digital information at some point involves individual peoples; I seek to identify how and where people are involved in the research data and consider how this shapes my ongoing ethical obligations.	I reflected on the anonymity (or otherwise) of data. I spoke to experienced colleagues about the Cambridge Analytica scandal which surfaced many issues of digital data and the public’s response to it.
When making ethical decisions, I seek to balance the rights of subjects (as authors, as research participants,	I reflected on the motivation behind this research, and the impact this might have on others. In all aspects of

as people) with the social benefits of research and researchers' rights to conduct research.	the research I tried to balance a deep respect for participants' discourse and practice with critical acuity.
I am keeping ethical issues under review during all steps of the research process.	I regularly discuss these matters with colleagues and advisers and engage in reflexive practices to explore changing dimensions.
Ethical decision-making is a deliberative process.	I regularly discuss these matters with colleagues and advisers and engage in reflexive practices. I continue to consult as many people and resources as possible in this process.

These guidelines, and the ongoing ethical obligation of this research to attend to the complex, and often conflictual, requirements of intrusiveness, privacy, vulnerability, potential harm, informed consent, confidentiality, and intellectual property rights (Eysenbach and Till, 2001), has meant, in practical terms, that I have consulted widely amongst university colleagues, and full approval has been granted by the University Research Ethics Committee. All interaction with participants was guided by the guidelines published by the AOIR (2012) and was subject to the University's own code of practice for research involving human participants.

The absence of face-to-face human interaction should not mislead; 'online social interactions are considered to be research with human beings, rather than static relations with texts . . . [and] . . . in a deontological system of ethics . . . you do not want to do any harm' (Kozinets, 2015: 244). This has implications for being part of someone's world, participation, subjectivity and bias, and informed consent. In sum, these are concerns about research ethics, revolving around various issues of harm, consent, privacy, and the confidentiality of data (Punch, 1986). Unfortunately, ethical considerations are subjective and in eagerness to gain access to participants it is possible to overlook research design or practice that fails to convince of its ethical propriety. Careful steps were taken to ensure this qualitative study could satisfy of its ethical propriety, beginning with steps to address informed consent.

After conversation with Jeff (an #AlteritOrg founder member and partner), I agreed with him a statement of disclosure with which I would introduce myself to the community. He was keen that my presence wouldn't dampen discussion, whilst I wanted to be certain that members of the community were aware that I was observing them. I posted on the forum, including the words:

it's important you know you've got a "researcher" in your midst. If you've got any questions about what I'm doing feel free to contact me at any time.

Jeff was happy for me, subsequently, to go into greater depth with individuals about the nature of my participant-observation. His feeling was that it was more appropriate to share detail on an individual level. Individual consent was further required for the semi-structured interviews. Informed consent, as defined by Berg (2001: 56) means 'the knowing consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation'. In accordance with university regulations, participants indicated their informed consent by signing to confirm they understand potential risk and benefit. This systematically ensures that participants were informed about what participation entailed so that the decision to do so was of their own choice. In this exchange with participants, I was able to describe how I would ascribe to them an alias and how I might use their contributions (cloaking their words for anonymity where they might be searchable online—Kozinets, 2002). I preferred to separate the process of obtaining consent from the interview itself so that participants had the opportunity to reflect and ask questions; then, prior to commencing the interview, I could re-confirm consent verbally, and remind participants of the voluntary nature of the interview that was about to follow. I found the participants respected this process and appreciated the thoroughness with which I deal with what they shared with me in the interview.

4.2.2.5 Human intelligence

And because it is based in participation, a netnographer should reach out in some sense, a human voice trying to find another human voice amidst the technology, and then write about the experience.

Robert Kozinets (2015: 67–68)

Netnography makes a demand on researchers to include hermeneutic interpenetration as a major element of analysing data. Kozinets (2015) develops seven intellectual interpenetrating elements, which he presents as the basis of a procedure for turning data into representation. Inspired by Miles and Huberman (1994), Kozinets describes how abstract and construct-based theoretical questions are collided with data in order to posit answers. In practice, this means that analysis takes place over an extended period; it overlaps and interacts with data (co-)creation, collection, and curation, and it digs deep into how we, as researchers, seek to find meaning and shape emergent learning. Table 4.v

(below) describes the processes of interpenetrating conceptually; practical implications are expounded later in Table 4.vi.

Table 4.v The seven conceptual processes of interpenetrating and their contribution to data analysis in this study (developed from Kozinets, 2015).

Element	Nature of hermeneutic interpenetration	Contribution to data analysis in this study
Imagining	This represents a stream of consciousness association.	Initially, imagining, has built on and developed initial reflective ideas that have surfaced from my fieldnotes. This process has also included exploring assumptions and motivations and coming to terms with my own research awareness.
Re-memorying	Tries to balance awareness and wariness in (co-)created, collected, and curated data.	This has involved working at an in-depth level with, for example, texts of interviews, trying to 're-memory' what has been said, to write it down afresh—sometimes in new words entirely—and to embrace a process which reconstructs memory through the unconscious mind.
Abduction	Considers ideas which are magnetically attracted, as well as those that are repelled, and explores the patterns culturally.	Techniques of abduction are used to try to fit things together, to decipher content, and to understand patterns in the emergent dataset.
Visual abstraction	In terms of conventional analysis, this is challenging; it takes a small idea and tries to make it a big idea.	This is playful. Visual abstraction requires imagination to breathe life into a piece (or small collection) of data to visualise it on a much larger scale. It is about experiencing the distance between the local and global, between what we know through the data, and what it might mean.
Artifying	Accesses a part of the brain which is not always engaged when it comes to making sense of a stream of data.	In this research, word clouds, images, and metaphors have been powerful ways of capturing the learning illuminated by knowledge.
Cultural decoding	Demands an interrogation of the cultural categories and codes selected, and the impact that this selection has on the construction of knowledge.	The process of cultural decoding brings together a diverse data set, collected from a wide and imaginative sample of people and things, and tries to reassemble them in a way which helps us understand the cultural categories we use as classification.
Tournament play	A quasi-Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' conclusion emerges, where ideas emerging from the data compete for intellectual supremacy.	After the 'end' of a process which at once combines both human and technological intelligence.

Above all, this institutes the centrality of human intelligence over a wide variety of data (co-)created with the use of technology.

4.2.3 Archives, interviews, and fieldnotes

As I have sought to emphasise throughout this chapter, participant-observation is central to netnography. Whilst trying to ‘internalize the culture as much as possible’ (which is how Fetterman (2009: 552) describes the work of the traditionally-oriented ethnographer) the technological dimension of netnography has helped me connect with people, ideas, locations, and challenges which are representative of a distinct cultural community—access to which would be near-impossible in person. The physical abstraction of netnography (compared to a more traditionally-conceived anthropological research site) might be thought to over-emphasise the researcher’s professional distance, and diminish hopes of internalising a culture, but this is a new reality of life lived online and offline, without division and without the need for distinction. As a research site, and a research experience, the combination of people working with the assistance of technology across sectors, organizations, specific projects, geo-locations, and time zones, researching #AlteritOrg mirrors modern living.

4.2.3.1 Archival data work

Archival data work (co-)creates data that is not a product of researcher involvement in the research site. Kozinets, et al. (2014: 266–267) explain ‘[t]hese types of data can constitute a “cultural baseline”, serving as a portrait of what the community was doing before the researcher made his or her incursion into that social media environment.’ Archival work has framed the early phase of data collection and provided evidence of the extent to which it mirrors twenty-first century living; interviews have framed the later phase which, still a facet of modern life, are reinterpreted in respect of time, place, and space. The focus of archival data work has been on published materials which foreground organizing principles and practices and set in some context that premise of #AlteritOrg which establishes it as representative of alterity. Through this process, I have moved from the consideration of static texts, to real-time interaction with the authors and fellow interpreters of many of these texts; as my knowledge has deepened, in the broader qualitative tradition I have been able to explore and understand meanings (Creswell, 2013).

4.2.3.2 Interview data

Interviews are a popular research technique across multiple epistemological stances (Bryman and Bell, 2015). My purpose in selecting interviews was to move from static text to lived experience—to ‘gaze into the soul of another’ and to open a dialogue ‘where researcher and researched offer mutual understanding and support’ (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997: 304). Kvale (1999) problematizes the notion of ‘dialogue’. He identifies an interview as being premised on dialogue (literally, an ‘inter-view’ or ‘inter view’) but later qualifies this to suggest that it is not a ‘democratic emancipating form of social research’ (Kvale, 2006: 408). In fact, it is (1) the interviewer who rules the interview; (2) and that the interview is a one-way dialogue; (3) that the interview is an instrumental dialogue; (4) that the interview may be a manipulative dialogue; (5) that the interviewer maintains a monopoly of interpretation; and, (6) from the subject’s perspective, that information may be given on the basis of an assumption that it is what the interviewer wants to hear (Kvale, 2006: 484–485).

I asked questions which I believed encouraged participants to talk openly and freely about organizing for alterity: prompting them to give examples of how principles were shared,²⁰ and practices were carried out;²¹ and to reflect on specific instances which might help me to understand their own experiences of organizing for alterity.²²

I chose to acknowledge Kvale’s reservations about interviewing, and that interviews are further shaped by time, place, and technology. I tried to distance myself from a traditional, formal interview stance, and looked to embrace more naturalistic ways of eliciting information, drawing on previous discussion, and thereby reducing that distance between observation and participation. Kozinets (2015) claims that over half of published netnographies incorporate interviews, and for me to explore understanding about the alterity of organizing, it was important to move beyond archival work to probe conflicting accounts, examine new ideas, and explore possible learning amongst those participants who hold the relevant experience. Kozinets (2015) argues that interviews will take different

²⁰ Representative questions: ‘Can you tell me about the “ground rules” of organizing?’ ‘How is that common understanding shared—about what organizing should look and feel like?’

²¹ Representative questions: ‘Can you tell me about what I would notice about organizing in and around #AlteritOrg?’ ‘What kind of advice do you think a newcomer would need about “how things are done around here”?’

²² Representative questions: ‘Are there any occasions when you have thought things are going really well in #AlteritOrg? What do you think made that so?’ ‘Can you think of any things that cause tension around the community?’ ‘What would be the first thing an “outsider” would notice about “working” around here?’

forms in netnography, and this represents one of the major developments from the single-site ethnographic tradition. The research site I selected operates across all global boundaries, meaning that it was impossible to only conduct face-to-face interviews. Instead, adopting and adapting the principles of interviewing for the realities of a consocial technologically enabled environment became an important challenge.

Forty-two participants were recruited through a variety of means, and this allowed me to be led by the wisdom of the community rather than to make sampling decisions that would simply deliver what I thought fit within my research design.²³ Initially, a call for participants was posted on the research site (as agreed with the gatekeeper). This surfaced twenty-six individuals who were keen to be involved in the study. While I worked through the consent process with them and carried out these interviews over the course of three months, I explored other connections I had made through #AlteritOrg. I then approached specific individuals that I had spoken to previously but who had not responded to my call. This surfaced another eleven individuals, and the final five participants came as a result of the interviews: “oh, you must speak to so and so . . . let me put you in touch”. Interviews were broadly semi-structured, but there was a degree of flexibility required in whether they were face-to-face, mediated by online communicative technology (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp), or synchronous or asynchronous text exchange. Where possible, the greatest form of interactivity was sought, which generally meant trying to establish real-time spoken exchange; where this wasn’t possible, other means were employed. Interviews were audio recorded, where possible, for later transcription and subsequent analysis.

4.2.3.3 Fieldnotes, reflection, and reflexivity

Hardy, et al. (2001) describe how the experience of doing research shapes its outcomes. Central to the ambition of netnography is that scholars commit to keeping fieldnotes: introspective reflections based on personal observations, interactions, experiences of being involved within the community and learning about particularities of the culture (Emerson, et al. 2011). Reflection, as a retrospective observation of research practice, emerges from these fieldnotes; but, more significantly, so does reflexivity. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) distinguish between the reflective and the reflexive, which Hibbert, et al. (2010: 48)

²³ Participants were given an alias and this identity is consistent throughout the text of the findings chapters which follow. All participants are members of #AlteritOrg. It was decided not to provide any further information which might allude to their personal or professional identity outside of the community.

describe as ‘exposing or questioning our ways of doing’. Reflexivity is, as concluded by Corlett and Mavin (2018: 393), the thinking, doing, and evaluating of qualitative research, which emerges from the researcher’s epistemological assumptions and positionality ‘on issues relating to representation and truth, to the researcher’s role and power relations with others, and to criteria for evaluating qualitative research’. Writ large, the practice of reflexivity has permeated this research, leading to ongoing questions about: researcher assumptions of reality, humanity, and knowledge (Cunliffe, 2011); claims and representation (Day, 2012); research question construction (Cassell, et al., 2005); the understanding of “alterity” and “organizing” as phenomena (Alvesson, et al., 2008); the impact of different possible epistemological perspectives (Cassell, et al., 2005). In these questions I have worked through that “uncomfortable experience”, described by Grandy, et al. (2015: 347), that makes possible ‘unique insights into the complexity of social reality’.

Reflecting on the move from static texts to real-time interaction, I am reminded that Kozinets (2015) describes this as a “non-negotiable” element of netnography. The realm of the Internet is a busy, dirty, and noisy one; as complex and challenging as any global city, spread across the earth. Not all interviews generated “Eureka!” moments; some were mildly disappointing, some sowed doubt and appeared contradictory to expectation and assumption. But, relatively speaking, they were moments of calm, where abductive clarity could—at least conceivably—emerge. Kozinets (2015) describes the process of netnographic study as seeking to find a human voice within the digital noise and writing about the experience. Interviews were those moments when human voices could rise above the digital noise and could attempt to ground the data of the online world in the ‘reality’ of a human experience.

4.2.5 Black swans and other surprises

Kozinets (2015) writes about black swans (after Taleb, 2007), and the netnographer is encouraged to embrace the black swan as a check of conceptualisation, or to explore gaps. Keen to avoid overlooking data which sat outside my own codes and emerging theories, I reflected on problematic data in my fieldnotes, to support the general trustworthiness of my analysis. Schwartz-Shea and Yannow (2009) describe six conditions of trustworthiness: a thickly descriptive manuscript; an explicitly reflexive endeavour; the triangulation of evidentiary resources; a detailed audit of data; evidence of negative case analysis; and documented member checking. The assimilative practice of the netnographer, in utilising

different methods alongside participant-observation, and the specific requirements spelled out by Rogers (2013) pertaining to the pursuit of 'online groundedness', provide ample opportunity to show, through a process of quasi-triangulation, how ideas have been supported in multiple settings and by multiple voices. In the critical tradition, reflexivity is a process that enables the recognition of black swans; the fieldnotes document points at which specific data, or combinations of data, has altered my thinking in ways unexpected. As identified in the introduction to this chapter, and consistent with the conceptual and theoretical preoccupations of this research, the research design must wrestle with alternative approaches to organizing. Through the (co-)creation, collection, and curation of data, this has been a central endeavour—the success of which will be reflected in the depth of interpretation of interpenetration of the data.

4.3 Interpreting and interpenetrating

In this section, I consider the choices made around interpreting and interpenetrating and how this reflects on the research's representational commitments; I pause to reflect, as a humanist netnographer, on this ongoing study. A humanistically-branded netnography favours more naturalistic and experience-close form of research understanding (Kozinets, 2015). Fieldnotes (which are integral to the research design) constitute a clear, human commitment to reflection, reflexivity, and re-telling of data in a way which balances reality/expectation, and data/representation. The capturing of narrative data (through archival work) and living stories (through participant-observation) leads to the opportunity to deepen understanding and construct new knowledge (through interview data). Ultimately, this compelling trajectory leads to uncovering of future possible narratives, expressed at their fullest when liberated from the scripts and reference points of the past (Boje, 2001).

4.3.1 Assumptions of polyphony

Polyphony, in a Bakhtinian sense, is often used to describe complex and sometimes combative layered tellings of the same event (Bakhtin, 1981). Belova, et al. (2008: 493) identify polyphony as both a textual strategy in writing research narratives and a tool for analysing organizations as discursive spaces where voices engage in a contest for audibility and power. Telling individual stories about alterious organizing principles and practices, (co-)created in one-on-one interviews, based around themes which have emerged from participant observation, and contextualising them, makes significant demands on the

researcher, to incorporate all this information within the conceptual framework of a study, and create a re-telling or re-memorying of these narrations of alternative organizing. The process, elevated by Kozinets (2015: 200), which adopts interpenetrating intellectual elements, represents the different steps taken in the turning of polyvocal data into representation. In practice that equates to taking abstract research questions, colliding them with data, and resolving any resultant fall out.

Whilst Kozinets (2015: 204) describes these seven interpenetrating intellectual elements as ‘non-overlapping steps’, I have found them much messier and more complex than he suggests or, indeed, as I have captured in the Table 4.vi (below).

Table 4.vi The seven conceptual processes of interpenetrating, the related activities, and their contribution to researcher reflexivity (developed from Kozinets, 2015).

Element	Activities undertaken	Researcher reflexivity (illustrative questions quoted from fieldnotes)
Imagining	I reviewed, annotated, and re-ordered my reflective fieldnotes. I legitimated ongoing thoughts by taking time to explore them, evaluate them, and identify ways in which they could be acted on.	<i>Am I surprised?</i> <i>What is this telling me ... am I reading it correctly?</i> <i>How many more of these do I think I will get?</i> <i>Is this even helpful?</i> <i>Why so much? Why so unclear?</i> <i>Isn't this very similar to that other example shared with me?</i> <i>Do I think this is connected?</i>
Re-Memorying	I reconstructed patterns in the data from memory. I explored my awareness of the data by challenging myself to note down memories (particularly) of conversations, identifying where my response was not captured in text, or when I brought new, retrospective thoughts to the emerging dataset.	<i>How did I feel when she said that?</i> <i>What do I really think she meant?</i> <i>That was a bit weird, wasn't it?</i> <i>Does that fit?</i> <i>How accurate is that telling?</i> <i>What did I feel when he revealed that?</i> <i>Is that something I would have felt comfortable talking about?</i> <i>Why did they look that way?</i> <i>Am I imagining this?</i>
Abduction	I combined elements of data to see which elements attracted and which repelled each other. I noted connections that might or might not work, allowing my mind to connect (occasionally) with existing knowledge and/or schema that help make sense of ‘new’ data and associated ‘new’ ideas.	<i>Does that work?</i> <i>Isn't that also what [author] meant by ...?</i> <i>Can I combine these two ideas?</i> <i>What happens when these things are separated?</i> <i>How ‘alternative’ is this really?</i> <i>Why doesn't this make sense?</i> <i>Who can I ask about this?</i> <i>What is it that I do not know?</i>

Visual Abstraction	I sketched elements of the data, creating multiple iterations.	<i>Can I see a link here? Is this just getting too complicated? Why can't I see this up close? Am I losing focus without that key local detail?</i>
	I examined close, and observed from afar, zooming in and out, moving from microcosm to macrocosm, trying to map the #AlteritOrg territory coherently and understand different principles and practices.	<i>What is going on here? Why do these links work when the one I thought was key is excluded? Can I represent this graphically?</i>
Artifying	I surveyed the multimedia formats (photos, images, audio, video) that constituted/accompanied data.	<i>Is this as exciting an image as I think it is? Can I represent this in words? How comes this seems so different from the other interview?</i>
	I tried to see if these creative formats, or the metaphors they employed, sparked connections which did not appear from written or spoken text, and which revealed something new about the research question(s).	<i>So, is this how they really see 'organizing'? Isn't this used somewhere else? What did it mean in that context? How do I translate this? What should I call this?</i>
Cultural Decoding	I became (quite intentionally) saturated in data.	<i>What attracts them to #AlteritOrg? Or what repels them from the mainstream? What do these people have in common? Does it even matter?</i>
	I carried out extensive participation and conversation to make better sense of this data, and to deepen my understanding of #AlteritOrg culture and how it related to the principles/practices of alternative organizing.	<i>Is that how they do things? Whose idea is this? What are they saying about the future?</i>
Tournament Play	I tested ideas about possible connections against the data of reality.	<i>Is this more convincing? What makes this idea seem the most durable? Is this adequate?</i>
	I critically evaluated emergent ideas about alternative organizing and their most credible interpretations.	<i>Is this unambiguous? What else is needed? ... and, in many respects, the one I had been waiting for: So, is this 'it'?</i>

Without doubt, these seven elements have prompted a rich engagement with data and encouraged me to think about it in terms which is far less formal, and far less procedural, than often described in other texts. It has been a playful experience, but one which has prompted ongoing researcher reflexivity: Table 4.vi details that process.

4.3.2 Analysis and interpretation

Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces,

the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns, or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensive fashion.

Danny Jorgensen (1989: 106)

Our experience of the processes by which organizing unfolds demands a focus on the social world—and how we know (and can know) that world. This thesis presents and interprets data from that intensive focus on the human organizing experience. It relies on multiple data sources, at the heart of which is the semi-structured interview—retrospective and real-time accounts of the alternative organizing, given by people who connect through the research site (the #AlteritOrg community of practice). It acknowledges that “going native” comes with risks—principally, becoming too close to the research to the effect that the researcher begins to adopt the informant’s views, and losing a higher-level perspective necessary for informed theorizing. The digital research environment is seductive and all consuming; it leaves little room to absent yourself, or to detach. This is both a blessing and a curse. Finally, Van Maanen (1979: 539) reminds researchers of the ‘fact of fiction’ in ethnographic research, and that longitudinal study goes some way to mitigating the risk inherent in a research design which makes no guarantee that data collected is ‘accurate and theoretically useful’.

To move to conclude this chapter, then, I describe the key analytical tools that are used in the analysis and set out the precise steps taken in 1st order and 2nd order analysis, in the building of aggregate dimensions, and the resulting data structure.

4.3.2.1 Key analytical tools

This thesis is not framed by a deductive logic, nor is it driven by grounded theory. I approached the study with a number of theoretical ideas which shaped and influenced the research design, but the intent has always been to identify the organizational world as socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Weick, 1969), to acknowledge people in organizations as “knowledgeable agents” (Mead and Miller, 1982), and to foreground the experiences and interpretations of people-as-informants (Johnson, 1990). This “reduces” the role of researcher in those formative stages of data analysis to that of a faithful reporter, rather than any suggestion of the great interpreter or noble theoriser. Underlying this intent is a commitment not to impose prior constructs or theories on the informants as some sort of a priori explanation for understanding or explaining their experience.

Privileging the voice of the informant and making it central to the research creates opportunity for new concepts, rather than affirmation of existing concepts (Gioia, et al., 2013). Also, underlying this intent is an assumption of me as researcher: that I am knowledgeable, capable of identifying patterns in data, and competent of formulating emergent concepts in theoretically relevant terms. The assumption of polyphony helps reconcile the multiple voices that raise tension between reality and expectation, and between data and theory. Data and theory are inextricably fused (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007) and my way of explicating the interplay between the two is through abduction (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Locke, et al., 2008; Van Maanen, et al., 2007) rather than logico-hypothetico, scientific deduction. Furthermore, and consistent with previous discussion this thesis has approached the field through established interpretations of alternative organizing whilst seeking to resolve problematisation and to rethink prior conceptions through a creative process of theory building.

Gioia, et al. (2013) describe how theory development demands that research captures—conceptually—those human organizational experiences which can convince of adequacy. Firstly, adequacy in terms of the meaning of those human organizational experiences, and secondly, adequacy in terms of the theorising about human organizational experiences. The authors build a systematic and inductive approach to concept development, from an extensive body of work on “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which is developed in multiple studies (e.g. Corley and Gioia, 2004; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia, et al., 1994; Gioia, et al., 2010). Adopting—and adapting—this framework for this thesis brings together the demands of netnography (as understood in terms of the most imaginative traditions of qualitative, inductive research) and the apparently conflicting demands of conceptual and theoretical advancement.

4.3.2.2 The human touch

As a humanist-oriented netnographer, my preference is to keep the data close to me in analysis, rather than rely on computerised methods. The analytical tools that I rely on in this research are, therefore, ‘naturalistic and experience-close’ (Kozinets, 2015: 197) and the process of meaning-making itself must take its own place in the introspective and reflective fieldnotes. The netnographic goal, of building a research representation, or achieving a synthesis of data, is preceded by analysis which, as described by Jorgensen (1989), means breaking up, separating, or disassembling research data.

4.3.2.3 Manual coding

I have used manual coding techniques to dissect my assembled archival data and I have transcribed interview data. Taking the text, I started by asking myself questions relating to what it is I am looking for in each extract

Representative questions:

- ... does the extract refer to principles/practices of organizing for alterity?
- ... how are the principles/practices described? ... how are they experienced?
- ... how are they enacted? ... are they resisted and, if so, who by?

I then identify a specific question and read the extract repeatedly, noting passages that respond to that question, highlighting words or passages to explore, often making use of colour to mark up the text; I repeat the exercise with a different question, or approach it with a view to making open observations.

Working through an archival dataset of 1,500 articles, I found it helpful to attempt to “tag” it for myself, and then compare with the tags the author and/or editor had selected. This is a simple comparative exercise to test out those basic understandings of whether my reading of the article has matched the intended effect of the author/editor? Where there has been a discrepancy in interpretation, I have cleaned up texts and entered them into a basic online word cloud generator, which delivers a graphical representation of key words in the text. This is a simple textual analysis tool, but I used this to help pinpoint specific words which recur and consider whether they give weight to the ideas being expressed.

4.3.2.4 Towards concepts, themes, and dimensions

The curation of a dataset amounting to 1,500 articles, 42 interviews, and 2 years-worth of field notes requires management of a large body of text. Spreadsheets were created to keep a central record of key material, recorded according to: data type (*archival*, e.g. published article; *participant-observation*, e.g. relating to my own activity within the community of practice; *interview*, e.g. one-on-one conversation with informants; and *reflective field notes*, e.g. from my own note books); author/originator; type (published directly by #AlteritOrg or accessed via an external link); key idea(s); quotable material; theme (e.g. a thematic ‘tag’ in the informant’s own words); concept (e.g. a secondary ‘tag’

derived from literature and related to my complete study); source (e.g. location of data for later inspection). The dataset was handled in this way to facilitate an analysis process which was informed by Gioia's approach (2013). This approach was selected because of the systematic way it handles conceptual development and articulates theoretical development grounded in empirical data; adding qualitative rigor and transparency to conducting and presenting inductive research. Whilst the methodology does not explicitly account for researcher reflexivity—and which I address in other ways—it does help the researcher avoid making assumptions and encourages them to adopt a more neutral view of human action in a social context. This meant that 1st order analysis was carried out, using the language of the informants, and concepts were identified which subsequently, in 2nd order analysis, were mapped onto themes from the theoretical realm. Finally, the 2nd order themes were evaluated to identify aggregate dimensions which distil the data into a clearer structure.

4.3.2.5 1st order analysis

Gioia, et al. (2013) describe an approach to enhancing qualitative rigour. This is achieved by an analytic process which begins by assembling data into categories: 1st order concepts, and 2nd order themes. The process of 1st order analysis tries to adhere faithfully to informant terms. In a series of processes derived from Kozinets' (2015) seven interpenetrating intellectual elements, data was read, re-read, coded, checked, and a large set of 1st order concepts were identified (there were in excess of 300). These concepts, expressed in informant terms, responded to their experience of the principles and practices of 'alternative' organizing. No attempt was made at this stage to distil categories; nor to reducing, colliding, simplifying, interpreting, or diluting 1st order concepts. It was a process of getting totally lost in the data before finding a way out (Gioia, 2004). Moving between 1st and 2nd order analyses required a variant form of axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this process, similarities and differences among the many 1st order concepts were identified. The objective was to reduce the 1st order concepts (according to a combination of inductive and deductive thinking) to a set of thematic ideas which faithfully distilled and represented the data.

4.3.2.6 2nd order analysis

It is in 2nd order analysis that I transitioned to become the knowledgeable agent; until that point, I had consciously privileged the informant as the sole knowledgeable agent. By

thinking inductively and deductively simultaneously, the analysis moved the set of informants (1st order) concepts to a theoretically abstracted set of (2nd order) themes. These themes (8 themes, derived from a set of 32 concepts) suggest a larger scale narrative and became the foundational blocks of adequacy in respect of the meaning of human organizational experiences, and the resulting scientific theorizing. This process moved to take a view of the data which emphasised the gestalt perspective (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), understanding individual pieces of data as parts of a much larger whole. Working now in the theoretical realm, I repeatedly questioned whether the themes that were emerging from the concepts were helpful in explaining what was going on. Did they reveal something about organizing for alterity? Did they reveal something about the nature of its enactment in an alterious organizing reality? I tried to keep my focus on nascent concepts, not extensively covered in the literature; sometimes this was possible, other times it was not. It was an iterative process—always meticulous, often painful, and sometimes insightful—of going back and forth between emerging insights of the data, extant theorisations, and creative speculation.

The next step was to consider the 1st and 2nd order analyses together, to consider patterns which appeared, and to link the 2nd order themes to overarching theoretical aggregate dimensions. The data structure is presented in Figure 4.vii, below. Following the data structure, I comment on the aggregate dimensions.

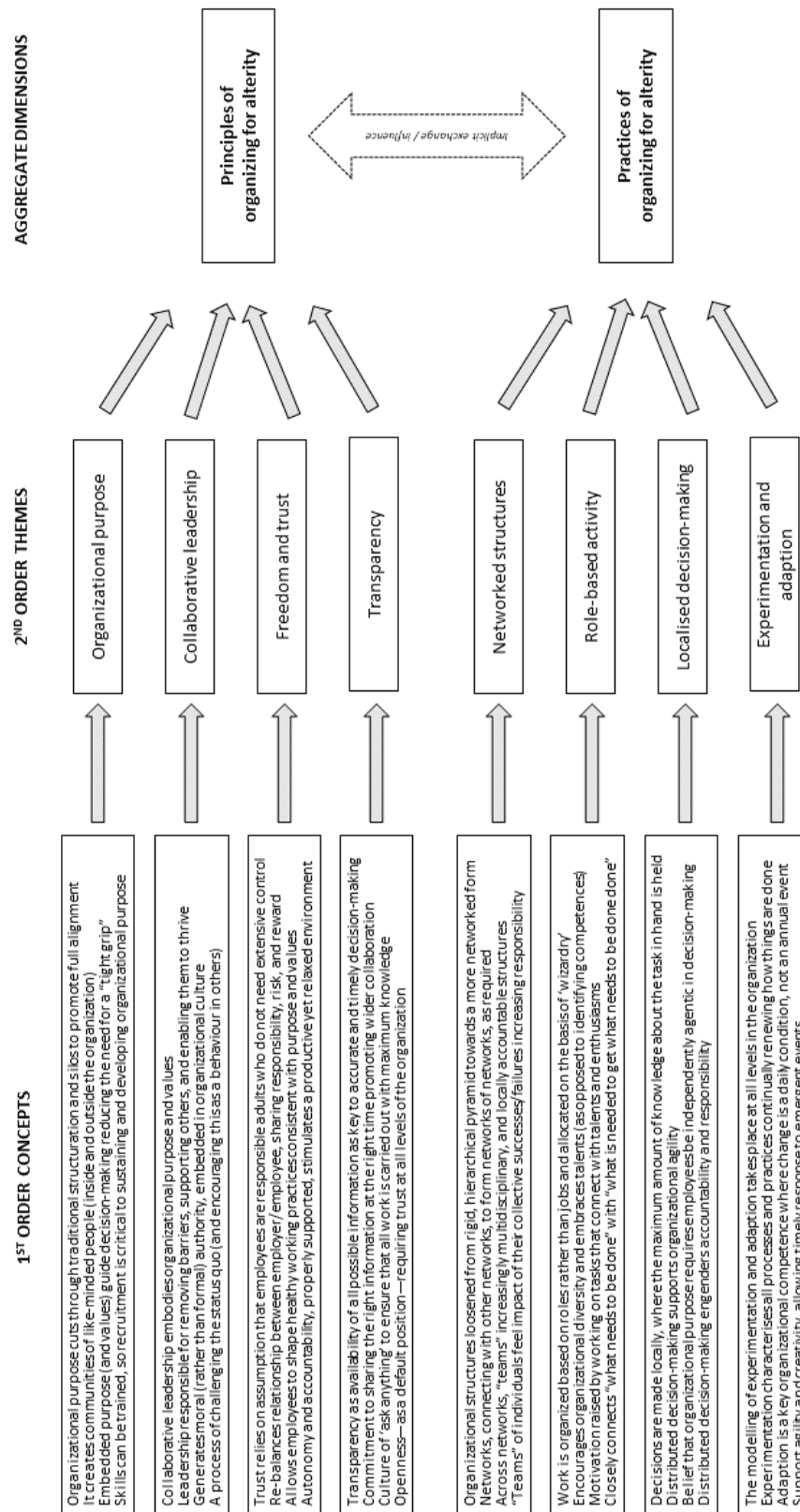
4.3.2.7 Data structure and aggregate dimensions

The data structure ‘not only allows us to configure our data into a sensible visual aid, it also provides a graphic representation of how we progressed from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analyses’ (Gioia, et al., 2013: 20). It captures the dynamics of concepts, themes, and dimensions, which are indicated by arrows, showing the implicit exchange and influence of the aggregate dimensions on each other.

The progression from 2nd order themes to aggregate dimensions represents another step taken in distilling the emergent themes. In the context of this research, two clear aggregate dimensions stood out: the principles of organizing for alterity (represented by the upper part of the data structure) and the practices of organizing for alterity (represented by the lower part of the data structure).

Following the Entr'acte, which briefly reflects on from “thinking about research” to “doing research”, and which draws reflective diary data to reveal the thoughts and feelings that constituted the basis of researcher reflexivity, I turn to the findings of the research. They are presented in four chapters: two chapters establish the contextual setting of #AlteritOrg, and then attention turns to the reality of discourses and practices, and the principles and practices of #AlteritOrg that are articulated and enacted. An increasingly a polyvocal telling of #AlteritOrg adds descriptive detail to that which is captured in the data structure, seeking to emphasise a research site that is dynamic and fluid, and principles and practices of organizing for alterity which should be evaluated as temporary and contested.

Fig. 4.vii Data structure, identifying 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes, and aggregate dimensions.



5. Entr'acte

In marking the transition in this thesis from thinking about research to doing research, I draw on entries from my reflective diaries (Czarniawska, 2007). These fieldnotes allow me to share with the reader the thoughts and feelings which characterise that change of focus and reveal the confidences and insecurities that shaped ongoing reflexion.²⁴ Rather than narrate their presentation with the advantage of hindsight, they are reproduced here without further comment.

Such a volume of literature. How to manage it, and how not to forget it? Spoke to [colleague] today who showed me [online tool]. Possible use? But I feel I need to physically connect with texts, not just cut and paste. Typing out extracts is helpful. Try to work out own system? Need to capture authors paradigm and positionality, not just key ideas/quatable material.

Research methods training. Comment from [colleague]: "This is a PhD. The ph stands for philosophy. If you want your thesis to be any good, then it has to have some philosophy in it."

Left supervision wondering about how I pull this all together in time. Requirements want fully articulated theoretical frame so soon but so much work still to do. I don't understand any of it! Uncomfortable experience.

Thesis title?

How to bring these opposing perspectives together? Is this a foolish thing to be attempting? Reading and rereading Burrell and Morgan. There's a reason radical change/regulation subjective/objective are kept apart . . . Have been looking at thematic interests of different positions. Maybe this can traverse perspectives rather than implicit ontological/epistemological distinctions?

I don't think "alternative" means anything. How about "alterity" . . . is the more opportunity for it to acquire meaning?

Reading accounts of netnographies. Feel it is going to be quite an immersion. Endless data seems to be available.

[Colleague] says: "how dirty is your digital data?" Fair question. Need to think about what I know about the data, and what I don't. Who are these people and how do I "know" them in the way I could offline? Does this matter? What are the resources for attesting to digital data quality?

²⁴ Reflexion is adopted in the form of a noun to indicate those internal cycles of inquiry which characterise my attempts to explore the relationship between subject/object, self/other, and to recognise those social forces which serve to construct my research perspective and paradigm.

What incredible dissonance is provoked by the word “performativity”.

So. Ethics went in today. Should hear back in a few weeks. What next? Need to get a better idea of what participant-observation is going to feel like. [Colleague] says make sure it really satisfies participation element . . . this was good comment to hear and I suspect it’s all too easy to sit back and wait for the netno. data to just appear. Next week must make a clear plan about how I will really engage with community members. Should I go to something?

This exchange (*Human Relations*) is extraordinary. Such open hostility. Welcome to theoretical belief?!?!

Thinking about relationship building online, and yet retaining critical distance. This feels like a complex undertaking. Is adopting this researcher identity going to take over much of my online existence?

Can I go back to reading!? Conceptual/theoretical work is so much more comfortable than “going out” and doing empirical work.

Still no thesis title.

Must post my introduction online tomorrow. What if they hate the idea of what I’m doing, and it all unravels? I remember now that [colleague] asked if I was sure this community would still exist in 18 months time. Aaarrggghhhhh.

Morning of starting fieldwork proper. Stop lurking. Bring on the data.

[selected extracts from researcher fieldnotes]

6. Findings: on location

This chapter begins the task of providing a rich description of #AlteritOrg based on longitudinal, qualitative engagement with its people, structures, and resources. Whilst the intention is to fully honour netnographic commitments of anonymity and confidentiality, the fullest possible description #AlteritOrg is evinced. In this chapter, and those chapters which follow, I draw on a mix of data sources: archival, observation, participation, interview, and fieldnote data are interwoven. Participants' words, integrated in-text, appear in italics; sources are attributed, as appropriate, in footnotes. Other contributions are attributed, as they appear, in-text. Participants names are anonymised, though the gender and nationality suggested in their aliases seeks to preserve an impression of the diversity of the community. Where data might be searchable online to ascertain identity, this data has been cloaked to protect anonymity and confidentiality. It is anticipated that the inclusion of participant language will help the reader connect in greater depth with the nature of source data engaged with during the 1st order analysis. My own reflections are also interpolated into this telling.

In Chapter 1, I offered an introductory description of #AlteritOrg so that the reader might begin to understand the community of practice they were to encounter in this thesis. I described how six founder members set out to construct and nourish an online space for ideas about organizing for alterity to be shared. #AlteritOrg was intended to enable people identifying as organizational theorists and/or organizational practitioners to exchange their experiences about life in alternative organizations. And, specifically, in organizations who were committing to a process of renewal and, thereby, prefiguring alterity.

We set out with very modest intentions but huge ambitions. I don't think we expected to achieve the reach we have so quickly. But I think this shows what a longing there is for this kind of enterprise, one that is hopeful of a better life.

[interview with Cheryl, founder member and partner]

#AlteritOrg began as an online publication. It was intended to be distributed as a bi-monthly email, in which members would share stories about their experiences of alternative organizing.

Amongst our founding team we had high hopes of what we might achieve. I had been writing for different publications for a while. All of the team had been sharing their work in fact. I felt that Laloux's book could spark a coming together of many peoples' work, and that as a collective we could have more of an impact.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

As the membership grew, newcomers offered their own individual interests and talents to the community; #AlteritOrg's scope quickly expanded. Through individual members' interests and talents, the expertise and experience on which #AlteritOrg could draw also grew. This expertise and experience, which was commonly described as being "gifted by its members",²⁵ led to the launch a bespoke website for #AlteritOrg. Soon after, a Facebook-powered forum was added; it quickly became full of member interaction and seemed well-suited to netnographic participant-observation.

To move so quickly to a professional website content management system was a surprise. Luckily Chris had experience of this aspect of our work, and the capacity to take the extra work on. His team is quite a lot bigger now, and this is really through organic growth, with new members offering time and skills to develop our community

[interview with Edie, founder member and partner]

The journey—from the initial conception of #AlteritOrg to the international community of practice that #AlteritOrg had become when my fieldwork concluded—took around four years. On more than one occasion during my fieldwork, colleagues remarked that it would be a surprise if #AlteritOrg still existed at the end of my research. (There are many reasons why we might make assumptions about the temporary nature of online communities.) Perversely, I welcomed the possibility that #AlteritOrg might change in a significant way over the course of my fieldwork, believing that this would reveal something important about alternative organizing. As it was, and rather the apocalyptic falling apart some might have expected, #AlteritOrg appears to have strengthened—not by recourse to formal, mainstream discourses and practices, but through a shared set of beliefs in alterity and a new organizational subjectivity. Fast forward to today. #AlteritOrg consists of a small band

²⁵ Being "gifted by its members" is a significant idea; members do not receive any financial reward or remuneration from what they do as #AlteritOrg.

of *partners*,²⁶ supported by a larger tribe of *collaborators and friends*,²⁷ who share a common purpose: *amplifying human dignity within organizations*.²⁸ As an expression of #AlteritOrg's purpose, dignity serves as both a means and an end—inextricably linked in the future the members prefigure.

6.1 Making an initial connection

I became aware of #AlteritOrg soon after it launched. After few months, I sent an email, requesting to join the community. I was personally and professionally curious. (And maybe the idea for a potential study was somewhere at the back of my mind). A brief exchange with Jeff followed:

[Me] Hello. I've been watching the community that is growing here and would like to sign up for regular updates. Is that how I become a member? I read Frederic Laloux's book and am fascinated by what might become of it.

[Jeff] Thank you Richard. Welcome. We want this to be a space that is nurtured by all its members. What are you able to contribute to the community?

[Me] Well, I'm trying to move my own thinking beyond the conventional paradigm (I've recently gained an MBA but am already trying to liberate myself from its grip) towards something more human and imaginative. I'd like to learn more and discuss Laloux's ideas here with others.

[Jeff] Thank you Richard. Would you write a short introduction for the community? Let people know who you are and tell others about your interests. Let them know how you might be able to contribute.

Jeff's opening response is direct. He sets out the expectations of the community; notably, that I should contribute, and share my interests with others. (I noted that netnographic lurking would not meet with his approval. I must do more than simply observe. I must participate.) So, I wrote, introducing myself to other members:

Hello. I am glad to join the #AlteritOrg community. I came across *Reinventing Organizations* and grew fascinated about the case studies that Laloux assembles,

²⁶ In an email exchange, Jeff describes the use of the word "partner". He writes: *where the members of the organization define how they work, but also what they work towards, then they start behaving less like employees, and more like partners*.

²⁷ "Tribe" is commonly used to refer to #AlteritOrg members—according to Chris, *those sharing a similar language, culture, and history . . . people who do not live and work in places associated with mainstream social practices*.

²⁸ Within #AlteritOrg, "amplifying human dignity within organizations" is a frequently-occurring description—I note a similar conceptual use of human dignity in the volume edited by Kostera and Pirson (2017).

and how he writes about the new *Teal* paradigm. I've been working with leaders and managers and would like to expand my practice. This feels like the kind of place where that will be possible. It will be great to connect with you.²⁹

And others replied:

[Chris] Hi Richard. Nice to see you here. What things are you working on right now? How can I help?

[Lucy] Glad to see you joined up. Look forward to discussing things with you. Check out my post about leaderless organizations—would love to hear your ideas.

[Maja] Where are you based? We are developing opportunities to meet up. I can put you in touch?

Seven further comments were made. I responded to each. Other members acknowledged my membership: some “liked” my introductory post, and others sent connection requests on other social networks. I accepted them. And, in doing this, I became part of the #AlteritOrg community, joining their network and connecting with their various projects.

In those initial months I visited the site quite regularly—at least three or four times a week—curious about its premise and intrigued by what might become of it. Keen to avoid the perils of lurking, and to meet the clear expectation that Jeff had of community members, I started to become more active. I had several lengthy exchanges with different members. I chatted with Chris about my transition from MBA back to working life and with Lucy about her work on leaderless organizations, prompting me to read a book she recommended.³⁰ Maja tried to connect me with some of her colleagues for a face-to-face meeting, but nobody was conveniently located; so, it remained another year until I physically attended my first #AlteritOrg event. (Maja was in Eastern Europe, and our interaction started to emphasise the cultural and geographic diversity of the community.) I found myself getting to know a site of organizing for alterity. Over the weeks and months that followed, I came to know #AlteritOrg as an alternative site of organizing; it made its own responses to the challenges of organizing, motivated by confronting current organizational discourses and practices (which we commonly regarded as *destructive*) and

²⁹ I used the term “my practice” because I felt this was a practice-oriented community. However, my underlying attention was already captured by the conceptual and theoretical implications of its work. I later adjusted how I described my interests to reflect this.

³⁰ *The Starfish and the Spider* (Brafman and Beckstrom, 2006).

by nourishing a new set of organizational arrangements (which it lived out in its everyday activities).

These months captured my attention and set me thinking about what we might learn from its discourse and practice; one year later, the empirical work reported by this thesis began, and I needed to re-introduce myself to the community.

Hello. I joined the #AlteritOrg community last year and have really enjoyed chatting with many of you. I wanted to make it clear that after discussions with Jeff I'm making a shift in my professional focus. I'm starting a PhD at Oxford Brookes University that looks at alternative organizing, such as the methodology Laloux proposes which is supported by the work of communities such as #AlteritOrg. I'm sure it will expand and develop over the coming months. But it's important you know you've got a "researcher" in your midst. If you've got any questions about what I'm doing feel free to contact me at any time either on here or using my email [richardlongman@brookes.ac.uk]. I'll continue to contribute as I can to the interesting discussions that are taking place amongst you all. Best wishes. And thanks.

This message was shaped by my discussions with Jeff. He didn't want my presence to stifle the lively community discussions, whilst I wanted to make it clear that I was observing the community and its individual members. We agreed that, when I interacted with individuals, I could also drop them a line to initiate a discussion about what being participant-observer might mean and fulfil my ethical commitments whilst also respecting his concern for the emerging practice of the community. (Contrary to my fears, my change in status met with no negative comment.) My participant-observation had begun, and my daily visits to the #AlteritOrg and engagement with members intensified.

6.1.1 Website

For a twenty-first century professional in the global north, entering the #AlteritOrg website is tantamount to an everyday experience—the kind of click of a mouse or swipe of a screen that have become engrained as some of our most accustomed habits. Nothing I found seemed particularly unusual. The HOME page showcases the latest articles, attractively arranged with a mixture of strong images and enticing titles. In the right-hand column are some recommended events, linking to external partners supporting the community. Elsewhere on the home page a MENU helps visitors navigate their way around, and a dynamic word cloud shows the most common tags employed by the community's different authors. Looking around, there is evidence of values and beliefs, espoused in text,

reinforced in image; but, yet, no people. Like a well-ordered lobby of a less-than-alternative organization, this is a holding bay, preparing the visitor's mind with subtle messages about the organization.

Using the website's menu is a conventional experience. The MAGAZINE tab allows you to search different sections of the magazine. The COMMUNITY tab suggests ways to connect with other members; it promotes regular "conversations" (facilitated by an online video-conferencing platform). Members from around the world *show up and synergies abound whilst cooperative projects are created and developed*.³¹ The forum draws on over 1,000 community members; interaction here *is focused on theory and practice: we share the things we are working on, we ask for and receive the insight and wisdom of others*. Through this practice we *ask challenging questions of our practice, and we developing understanding of our work in reinventing organizations and social systems*.³² Moving through the menu bar, the ECOSYSTEMS tab leads to details of the countries, sectors, and movements in which this work is being carried out; and the PRACTICE tab directs visitors to a collaborative wiki site, a set of practical tools and resources, details of ongoing action research and projects, and a calendar of events. Via the USING tab, visitors can put names to faces, and see the profiles of the partners currently engaged in serving this community. External links recommend specific training programmes, conferences, workshops, mentoring; though these are underwritten by a carefully worded advertising policy statement, which states that *nothing you see here . . . is just a source of revenue. We only share opportunities our community is drawn to and would happily participate in*.³³ Elsewhere on the site, it is possible to sign up for magazine highlights, new articles, and other emails, and visitors are welcomed to "get involved", "donate", "write an article", and "join our team".

This initial description is provided to help you visualise #AlteritOrg. At first glance, it appears to be a conventional web space, organised around standard hierarchical internet protocols under Creative Commons Licence. Its purpose, as an online magazine, lies in sharing ideas from a community of theorists and practitioners engaged in *reinventing*

³¹ Archival data: from promotional email sent to encourage member participation.

³² Archival data: from forum post.

³³ Archival data: from forum post.

organizations³⁴ and offering a set of ideas (inflected by a prefigurative ethos) for bringing future outcomes closer to the present day.

6.1.2 Beyond the website (extending the network)

The website functions an organizational front door, through which visitors encounter clearly stated values and observe a slick presentation of organizing beliefs. On social media platforms, #AlteritOrg has a small amount of activity. In these external-facing spaces, it connects with the work of alternative organizational thinkers (e.g. Otto Scharmer, Brian Robertson, and Harold Jarche)³⁵ and with alternative organizing practices (e.g. *Sociocracy*, *ResponsiveOrg*)³⁶. On Facebook—where text can be lengthier, and images and videos enrich the user experience, and a more intuitively connective technology is found—#AlteritOrg presents a more lively aspect.

On the forum, a busy public group documents the day-to-day existence of #AlteritOrg and helps us construct its empirical reality. A welcome message emphasises the threefold objectives of the group: (1) introducing members projects and asking for/receiving support; (2) exploring questions from our practice; and (3) sharing relevant news and views. (Again, nothing I found seemed particularly unusual.) I would scroll through the discussion board, viewing posts and comments—quite disciplined posts, in fact, responding to the three objectives of the group. I regularly looked at the pinned post inviting members to introduce themselves:

Dear members. You are invited to become present in #AlteritOrg. How did you arrive in our community? What are your passions? Do you have questions? Do you bring hopes to fulfil? What can we offer to you, and what can you offer to us? Please share about yourselves so we might know you better. And consider your reply to this post as your first gift to #AlteritOrg.

[forum post by Maja, community forum moderator]

³⁴ The premise of #AlteritOrg's existence lies in *reinventing organizations*, as per Laloux's (2015) monograph. This is the focus of Chapter 7.

³⁵ Otto Scharmer founded the Presencing Institute at MIT and chairs the IDEAS program for cross-sector innovation. Brian Robertson is an entrepreneur who founded *HolacracyOne* to pioneer a new brand of alternative organizing. Harold Jarche works with people and organizations to master the emerging network era with a focus on the alterity of social learning and connected leadership.

³⁶ *Sociocracy* is a brand of alternative organizing which pursues harmonious social environments as well as productive organizations and businesses (Rau and Koch-Gonzalez, 2018). *ResponsiveOrg* aims to develop alternative organizing through a shared language that promotes and enables a fundamental shift in our way of working and organizing (www.responsive.org).

The community is not shy in asking for members to—freely—give.

Literally hundreds of responses follow. They demonstrate how members come from a wide variety of backgrounds, seeming to share an expression of hope for the future—largely centred on humanity, and believing dignity can be better amplified in organizations.

Some posts explore specific questions of practice:

I'm introducing *Teal* ideas in my new role as CEO of a charity and I wondered if anyone would recommend any videos that I can share with others on the journey with me. I'd like to find accounts from people that have gone through the change as a "follower" because I can't tell that personal story of change.

[forum post by Michael, member]

This post, for example, attracted sixteen responses. Various resources are shared. Some resources come from the main #AlteritOrg website, but there are also links to podcasts, YouTube videos, external websites, and personal comments of affirmation.

Others share news, views, and their own expertise and enthusiasm:

I just put together a short online course based on extensive research and practice to help people understand how you can apply energetics work . . . there is clear scientific evidence pointing to the fact that we can impact our systems through disciplined consciousness practices. Check it out ...!

[forum post by Paul, member]

Another member is inspired by this and shares an external link, whilst somebody else responds with another practical tool derived from empirical study. Karl also joins in:

Maja asked me to share this with the community: a new, simple visualisation of *Holacracy* that we have developed from our own practices. We use *Holacracy* . . . and are happy to share our experience with it with interested companies and organisations.

[forum post by Karl, member]

This post is commented on by one of the partners, who asks if it might be reproduced on the #AlteritOrg site. Shortly after, it is included in the next issue of the e-zine; more resources, shared freely, by individual members, for their collective and respective networks.

Although reliant on the platform's algorithm to order content, a search function and set of topic tags allow me to *shake the system* and more fully explore the introductions, questions, and news.³⁷ Often, after reading individual introductions, I clicked through to members' own profiles—where pictures of their families, pets, and workplace-related memes await—here I could glean some information as to who they are, and what motivated them. (This humanised an online research practice which risks physical abstraction.) Furthermore (and unlike this thesis) #AlteritOrg's forum is not made up of faceless aliases.³⁸ As a member of the community myself, I know who others "are"; they know likewise. This enhances a sense of being a professional community of practice rather than a looser collection of anonymous individuals. And, as this professional community of practice *nourishes the alternative organizational space*, I am struck by the easy and generous levels of interaction that characterises my daily visits.³⁹

6.2 A sense of the ordinary

There are other communities inspired by the work of Frederic Laloux, whose book *Reinventing Organizations* (2014) boasts that 'the days of the top-down hierarchy as the dominant organizational framework are numbered' (Collins, 2016). Through Laloux's *paradigm-busting framework*,⁴⁰ the eight partners of #AlteritOrg, surrounded by a larger tribe of collaborators and supporters set out to *build and share intelligence, awareness, practice, and impact*;⁴¹ that is, until (their version of) organizing for alterity becomes mainstream. As a modern and international community facilitated by online technology, it boasts over 1,000 members from 27 countries (encompassing Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and the Americas) and revels in the *diverse and global perspective* this brings.⁴² Negotiating different waking and working hours, #AlteritOrg communicates across multiple platforms: sharing text-based conversations, documents, workspaces, and technologically-mediated video conferencing. Online collaborative tools, such as Slack, support the sharing of information as well as checking progress and resolving queries.

³⁷ Interview with Sally.

³⁸ This is never explicitly stated as an expectation but seems to be common practice across the community.

³⁹ Interview with Jeff, founder member and partner.

⁴⁰ Interview with Anabel.

⁴¹ Interview with Eric.

⁴² Interview with Cheryl, founder member and partner.

*Mainly we use Slack to coordinate tasks amongst the partners and the immediate team working on building the community and maintaining its day-to-day operations.*⁴³

[interview with Chris, founder member]

A small number of members also benefit from time spent together face-to-face: for example, on retreat, and at conferences. *As a tribe who do not live and work in the towns and cities associated with mainstream social practices,*⁴⁴ their desire for human interaction (beyond that which is facilitated by technology) is strong.

*We hosted a Teal track at the 3rd Integral European Conference. It was such an exciting time to share our practice and to really get inside the thoughtful work which is brought to life by Fred's [Laloux] ideas.*⁴⁵

[interview with Lilian, founder member and partner]

. . . it was about meeting the people and the connections—the momentum generated after the conference, because of the conference.

[interview with Eric]

Online and offline, members talk about work organized around specific projects, with responsibilities allocated to roles (rather than to people).

Organizing my own workflow is simple. Each morning I check the streams that are relevant to my role and respond to tasks that the role needs me to do.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

We trust other people to carry out the work that matters to their view of the community. Our focus on roles means that we spend time doing things that need to be done—not doing things we think need to be done or thinking about things other people should do.

[interview with Lucy]

Collaborative working appears emblematic of the high levels of trust amongst the group.

⁴³ Slack is a cloud-based set of team collaboration tools.

⁴⁴ Interview with Chris, founder member.

⁴⁵ The Integral European Conferences are the main gatherings in Europe for the global integral community. Wilber's Integral Theory is the shared reference point. <https://integraleuropeanconference.com/>.

Working together, trust is central to our practice: once a responsibility has been agreed, we trust people to make decisions. That includes leaving them to organize what they get done, and when, and how.

[interview with Lilian, founder member and partner]

After three years this remains *a labour of love*⁴⁶ and all work is still voluntarily carried out—or gifted. There is talk of a system of equity distribution being developed, and work is underway on a formal legal structure which can be adopted alongside an appropriate business model. Funding continues to be generated in the form of donations, sponsors, partnerships, co-sponsorship, and consulting, all consistent with the general practices of *Reinventing Organizations*. This is a not-for-profit operation; indeed, nobody receives financial recompense for time working on its business.⁴⁷ Membership is free and easy; an email, or a click on a website, along with a statement about your personal interest in the community will have you accepted. And, its governance model is uniquely ‘alternative’; the underlying intellectual arguments about how and why work is carried out demonstrably sets it apart from those formal, structured organizations from which it seeks to disassociate itself.

6.2.1 Discourses, practices, and subjectivities

Together, #AlteritOrg members seek to enact Laloux’s three organizational “breakthroughs”: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose. Yet, their vision extends beyond their own discourses and practices—sometimes it feels like #AlteritOrg is an evangelical ecosystem, looking to spread its beliefs across countries, sectors, and movements, and, in so doing, to author new subjectivities.

We look for storytellers of what is emerging in every country. We have correspondents in 27 countries so far, sharing news about countries awakening to those higher human needs, once the basic ones are met.

[interview with Edie, founder member and partner]

⁴⁶ Interview with Lilian, founder member and partner.

⁴⁷ Members work in a variety of other organizations; some as full-time, permanent employees, and others as consultants or freelance professionals on temporary contracts. Whilst it is difficult to generalise across of membership of over 1,000 people, members tend to be employed and educated; their ability to offer unpaid time to #AlteritOrg leads to some assumptions about their lifestyle. A smaller number of members appear to be retired though they remain engaged with different economic and/or social activities.

An editorial article underlines how it seeks to develop its presence in different countries:

#AlteritOrg needs more correspondents to represent the breath of our community. We hope for a network of people writing about organizations and communities going Teal, Responsive meetups, U Hubs, Holacracy trainings, and the many other initiatives shaping the future of work around the world. Making films, recording interviews, sharing the way we are living for the future.

[editorial article by Chris, founder member]

And, it seeks correspondents in diverse sectors too:

Zooming in from the organization to the individual and then zooming out to level of society reflects that the three Teal breakthroughs of evolutionary purpose, self-management and wholeness, form a foundational pattern of the evolution of organizational as well as social systems. We hope for a network of people to share how we animate different corners of the working world. The businesses, initiatives, sectors, movements, and communities we inspire.

[editorial article by Chris, founder member]

Another partner tells me that *the depth of our understanding of “going Teal” increases day by day as it reaches new sectors and touches more people’s experiences of life and work.*⁴⁸ Indeed, I begin to expand my own knowledge of these settings, exploring its footholds in health care, consulting, technology, manufacturing, start-ups, and local government; reading about case studies from across the ecosystem in which its ideas have been put into practice.

While the ecosystem contains different initiatives and movements aimed at organizational transformation, these initiatives and movements share values and visions of self-management and self-organization. Calls regularly go out to connect with people from these different initiatives and movements. (I pose a question about this, trying to understand how #AlteritOrg explain how their fervent commitment to *Teal Organizing* can at the same time embrace other initiatives and movements. I confess I don’t ever get a satisfactory answer. Ordinary members seem unsure, partners and other dominant voices in the community seem evasive or defensive. Protecting my position as participant-observer, I realise I recoiled from unpicking this tension, and now wish I hadn’t.)

⁴⁸ Email exchange with Jeff, founder member and partner.

The contradictions and inconsistencies that surface in my encounters with the different members were gradually met with more robust questioning on my part, as I grew in confidence within the community. I started to detect how *being part of an ecosystem of movements and initiatives* impacted on its discourses and practices.⁴⁹ It became commonplace, for example, to accept without question the integration of *Holacracy* as a specific methodology to guide self-management—yet there were fundamental differences between *Teal Organizing* and *Holacracy*. Similarly, there seemed to be a degree of liberty when talking about the *purpose*⁵⁰ of *Teal Organizing* and, for example, the *purpose* of *B-Corps*. (At various times in the study I really wrestled with these contradictions.) However, since the intention of the study was to explore the principles and practices of #AlteritOrg, rather than its strict adherence to the *Teal Organizing* framework, I tried to position these contradictions as some sort of background context. Yes, I wanted to recognise the extent of intellectual consistency of principles and practices, but I hoped to leave the research site, ultimately, with a contribution to knowledge about organizing for alterity as a broader endeavour, and to be able to write about how these principles and practices of organizing for alterity are constitutive of a community's journey of becoming.

To move forward, I challenged myself to articulate for myself #AlteritOrg's broader connection with *Teal Organizing* and the wider ecosystem of movements and initiatives. I felt I needed to step back and reflect on the discourse, practices, and subjectivities which, though new to me, were seeming more-and-more familiar. I was wary of unconsciously allowing them to be naturalised in my mind and wanted to try to make sense of what I was experiencing.

My attempt reads:

As a self-managed and self-organized community of practice, #AlteritOrg has no formal managers and leaders. Embracing its wholeness, #AlteritOrg values humanity as well as the rationality that mainstream organizations prize; and, pursuing its (evolutionary) purpose, #AlteritOrg serves a *global wave*⁵¹ extending far beyond its own goals.

⁴⁹ Interview with Edie, founder member and partner

⁵⁰ Purpose is a key concept associated with the discourse and practice of the different initiatives and movements encompassed by #AlteritOrg.

⁵¹ I take this phrase from Lucy.

(I shared this, privately, with several members. Some liked it, others didn't really understand why I had bothered; one or two gave me the distinct impression that I was doing something as unthinkable as rewriting the Bible.)

In practice, by selecting #AlteritOrg as a research site, I was explicitly moving away from building knowledge about organizing in the context of a formal, structured organization. Rather, the opportunity was there to deepen understanding about discourses and practices of organizing from across a dynamic network which was developed by inter- and intra-connected members. #AlteritOrg's own statement of purpose is described by members as *ambitious and unambiguous*⁵²; for some critical observers, the prospect of promoting *a new mainstream of organizing work and life*⁵³ might appear a startling echo of Weber's routinisation of charisma. Through netnography, critical inquiry addresses those claims "on location". This thesis has not set out to construct an isolated critique of #AlteritOrg, but to use it as a point of departure, rich with data, to analyse and critically-evaluate the premise of its claims of alterity, and to identify the principles and practices embraced and embodied by its members across their many networks.

⁵² Email exchange with Eric.

⁵³ Interview with Eric.

7. Findings: an alterity premised on . . .

This chapter interrogates the foundational beliefs of #AlteritOrg and seeks to uncover what it is premised on. For the purposes of this thesis, I neither consider a “premise” to be singular, nor stable. Nonetheless, it seems possible to claim that its alterity is premised on something—though, more probably, on somethings. This is an important step in, first, understanding and, then, (re)constructing for the reader a sense of a new subjectivity being embodied by community members. So, I begin by noting that #AlteritOrg is premised on a set of discourses and practices advanced by Frederic Laloux (2014) in his book, *Reinventing Organizations*. Corollary to this, it embraces the work of other movements that focus on organizing as a process of renewal, citing an active interest in *Agile Methodologies*, *B Corps*, *Democratic Workspaces*, *Holacracy*, *Management 3.0*, *ResponsiveOrg*, and *U Labs*. Linking these different responses to organizing for alterity is a thematic thread which commits explicitly to *organizational renewal*. In this chapter, I focus on the principles [7.1] and practices [7.2] which underly a shared set of agreements as to what constitutes, and is constituted by, organizational renewal—these principles and practices are further evidenced in the data from which the data structure is built (see PAGE). I consider the new subjectivity embodied by #AlteritOrg members (which I experienced at first hand throughout the fieldwork) [7.3] and reflect on its nature in terms of Adorno’s conception of the “radical aesthetic”. The chapter concludes by calling to mind again the organizational becoming literature and Bloch’s ontology of the Not-Yet-Being [7.4].

To further contextualise #AlteritOrg, I turn attention to Frederic Laloux’s book and its implicit ideas about alterity. Laloux claims sales of almost half-a-million copies. Even the publishing of the book is “alternative”, and embraces a “pay-what-you-feel-right” model, offering a hard copy of the book at the fixed price of \$9.95, or an electronic download of the book which readers can choose to pay for after having read it and ascertained its value to them. Presented in three parts, it claims to be ‘written for people (founders of organizations, leaders, coaches, and advisors) who sense that something is broken in the way we run organizations today and who feel that something entirely different is called for . . . but wonder what that might be’ (*Reinventing Organizations*, 2018).

In sum:

Part 1 of *Reinventing Organizations* takes a sweeping evolutionary and historical view. It explains how every time humanity has shifted to a new stage of consciousness, it has also invented a radically more productive organizational model. Could we be facing another critical juncture today? Could we be about to make such a leap again?

[<http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/>]

Laloux takes an ambitious approach to describing organizational development, and this first part articulates the theoretical foundation claimed by #AlteritOrg. Its bold survey takes in of 100,000 years of organizational development and the types of consciousness that give rise to organizational structure. The premise is that human consciousness evolved in stages, and each stage of development gave rise to approaches to organizations best suited to the era in which they arose. Each stage of development (represented as colours: red, amber, orange, green, teal) maps onto a time in history and its cognitive, psychological, and moral orientation. *Teal Organizations*, it claims, are *more healthy and soulful* and that *Teal* is, de facto, the destination for any organization *wishing to succeed in these complex times*.⁵⁴

Part 2 serves as a practical handbook. Using stories from real-life case examples (businesses, schools, and hospitals), this section describes in detail how this new, soulful way to run an organization works. How are these organizations structured and how do they operate on a day-to-day basis?

[<http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/>]

Laloux identifies the core practices of *Teal Organizations* and describes their cultural significance through a series of case studies.⁵⁵ Based on his empirical research, he claims three breakthroughs as characteristic of *Teal Organizations*:

- 1) self-management, a system of peer relationships, without the need for hierarchy or consensus;
- 2) wholeness, a set of practices that invite us to bring all of who we are to work; and,
- 3) evolutionary purpose, where members of the organization listen in to what the organization wants to become, and what purpose it wants to serve.

⁵⁴ Interview with Caroline.

⁵⁵ The twelve cases in the book consist of for-profit and non-profit organizations of various sizes from the global north.

Part 3 examines the conditions for these new organizations to thrive. What is needed to start an organization on this new model? Is it possible to transform existing organizations? What results can you expect at the end of the day?

[<http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/>]

Laloux sets out a guide for organizations that want to transition towards *Teal*, though I recognise clear tension in how culture, context, and purpose is intended to be shaped. For example, Laloux (2014: 251) argues that the ‘culture of the organization should be shaped by the context and the purpose of the organization, not by the personal assumptions, norms, and concerns of the founders and leaders’; but, the critical factor for “going *Teal*” seems to be that its senior management and owners must have an integrated worldview and psychological development consistent with *Teal*. So, whilst no founder or leader should shape the context, or the purpose of the organization, founders and leaders must share a specific cognitive frame. There are further implications for the financing of the organization, which must be consistent with a *Teal* perspective, which would seem to limit access to capital for organizational development purposes.

Reinventing Organizations presents—in some detail—how to organize for (its) alterity. It exhibits a clear link between theory and practice and provides support for those seeking to move beyond its premise. It resources discussion of its principles and practice with examples from empirical study, but to interrogate this in more detail requires some low-level familiarity with its roots in Integral Theory (Wilber, 2000) and Spiral Dynamics (Beck and Cowan, 1996). It is from Laloux’s combination of theory and empirics that he makes claims of three organizational breakthroughs: evolutionary purpose, self-management, and wholeness.

7.1 Principles of organizing for alterity

Reinventing Organizations is grounded in the work of Wilber, Beck, Cowan, and others. This situates it, theoretically, in a setting that is ripe for debate and dispute. I feel compelled to approach the possibilities of this setting as fertile ground for new ideas in organizational studies, whose long-standing attachment to established paradigms finds increasing critique. Laloux’s ideas sit at the heart of this thesis and the discourses and practices he has advanced have catalysed this part of the organizing for alterity subjectivity. This thesis does not position itself to present the transcendental truth of his work, nor to legitimise or critique the claims of Wilber, Beck, Cowan, and others. Instead, it recognises theoretical

setting navigated by Laloux, and acknowledges the *différance* this perspective brings to existing debates. It recognises how the premise of Laloux's ideas are challenging to mainstream readings of organizing but welcomes the opportunity to refresh understanding of the discourses and practices of organizing for alterity within the subjectivities of communities such as #AlteritOrg.

7.1.1 Spiral Dynamics

Over the course of my study I regularly receive emails from Joe. He is a well-known member of #AlteritOrg, frequently posting and commenting, often writing articles. I have had multiple conversations with him; some of them via text exchanges (synchronous and asynchronous) and via one enjoyable face-to-face encounter at a workshop. His interest lies in Spiral Dynamics and leads multiple courses in this field. (I get a sense from our conversations that his interest in Spiral Dynamics transcends his membership of #AlteritOrg, and the overtures he makes to different members of the community embeds him as a key member in developing the ideas underpinning the advance of #AlteritOrg.) Initially, he describes himself:

I like to see the bigger picture. I'm a pragmatist. A systems thinker. But I also have an alchemist's impulse to transform.

[face-to-face conversation with Joe]

And, in an exchange of emails, early in the study, I ask him to tell me a bit about the relevance of Spiral Dynamics, and he explains:

It [Spiral Dynamics] sheds light (1) on how people to respond to the world around them in given circumstances and with their particular skills and abilities, (2) how people think about things, rather than what things they think about, and (3) this leads to complex questions about bringing about change including 'HOW should WHO lead WHOM to do WHAT and WHEN?'.

I reply, asking him how—specifically—we see this interpolated into *Reinventing Organizations*. Can he help me with the detail?

Look. From my reading, Laloux is not an Integral theorist, and I know he is not trained in Spiral Dynamics. He uses these ideas in a way he finds accessible although in fact they are much more complex than he makes out. But he seems to do it all quite skilfully (well, judging by the success of the book).

He concludes his email with the words:

There is a lot more to know. Those who are genuinely interested in *Reinventing Organizations*, and who want to support organizations in their transformation, will gain a lot from engaging with this knowledge at a deeper level.

The next day, as if on cue, another email arrives. Again, I read its offer of workshops and courses upcoming in the next three months, I thank him and say how full my diary is, and file it away for later. (Perhaps, in his words, I am not *genuinely interested . . . at a deeper level*, which would seem rather damning.)

7.1.2 Integral Theory

As I get to know Joe, and others, I get a sense of the strength of their attachment to the underlying premise of #AlteritOrg and how that connects with the wider alternative organizing space. Some allow me to quiz them, whilst others are less forthcoming. I ask Chris, another key figure in #AlteritOrg to help me understand that important link with Integral Theory. He says:

Laloux's work emerges from Wilber's, yes? Well, Wilber's evolutionary approach derives from finding where you are in within the framework of natural emergence, dismantling the blocks to progress and creating the internal framework to support ongoing self-development. Integral theory seeks to integrate all of human wisdom into a new, emergent worldview that is able to accommodate the gifts of all previous worldviews, including those which have been historically at odds: science and religion, Eastern and Western schools of thought, and pre-modern, modern and post-modern worldviews. One of its most exciting expressions is in Teal Organizing.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

This portion of interview takes a while for me to unpack, as I stumble into a set of meanings—almost a new language—with which I feel rather unfamiliar. But the alterity on which #AlteritOrg is premised has strong theoretical roots, and these evolutionary and emergent lines of thought reach an apotheosis in the work of Ken Wilber, who discusses, re-interprets, and synthesises various views on spiritual development as well as systems thinking. This has provided input for the New Age movement, comparative religion,

developmental psychology, world philosophy; and now, it seems, for alternative organizing.⁵⁶

The language of Wilber (integral, quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types) is not much taken up by rank and file #AlteritOrg members. Robin suggests it is *much more complex than we need to understand at a practitioner level*;⁵⁷ whilst Cheryl indicates that whilst she is *deeply committed* to the embodiment of #AlteritOrg she prefers (and trusts) others to commit to *the intellectual foundations of what [the community is] trying to achieve*.⁵⁸ My conversations with Joe suggested that I should also speak with Jackie, whose interests lie in the theoretical development of Integral Theory. In a long Skype conversation, we talk about how her knowledge of Wilber's work has connected with her interest in organizational transformation. (Again, I later reflected on how the notes I made during this conversation appear in an almost wholly new language). But I pick up on a specific connection Jackie makes between Integral Theory and the reduction of hierarchy. She explains:

In the integral world hierarchies do exist, but they don't equate to moral superiority. There are higher levels of development and complexity. There are people of greater skills and talents. But none of these suggest a moral superiority, or a more complete expression of reality, or that those lower down in the hierarchy should not be afforded equal respect.

[Skype conversation with Jackie]

The point I seek to recognise in this is that these ideas about performing organizing have a clear connection with a body of theoretical work, even if many members prefer to focus on the embodied subjectivities. James starts a forum discussion.⁵⁹ Referencing Spiral Dynamics, Integral Theory, and their adoption by Laloux, he asks:

[James] Do these elements represent the ideological base of this community? Or do they rely on faith? It seems interesting to me, but not ideas that I can adopt as 'truth' . . . simply a novel way to look at things that may provide different results.

[Mary] . . . It would really help to have words that don't need so much explanation outside the integral scene!

⁵⁶ Wilber, who writes the foreword to the book, describes it as 'highly practical [though] solidly grounded in evolutionary and developmental theory' (Laloux, 2014: ix): of course, Wilber considers it to be 'truly pioneering work'.

⁵⁷ Interview with Robin.

⁵⁸ Interview with Cheryl, founder member and partner.

⁵⁹ Observation data: James and Mary are members. Claude is a member who recently guest edited an edition of the magazine.

[Claude] Developmental models are helpful and there's good reason for referring to them in a forum that aims to support Teal Organizations. There are better and worse ways of handling them, as any more sophisticated 'integralist' knows. Those people who do the research on these models are actually usually the most humble people and the most cautious about jumping to conclusions. So, the recommendation is always to hold SD or Wilber or Maslow or Piaget or Kegan LIGHTLY. This is not ideology—it is based on science. But like any science it can be used unskilfully and carelessly and can degenerate into a mere belief system.

Claude's advocacy of the theoretical premise claimed by Laloux attracts further responses, demonstrating that these are ideas that are contested in a community—even though it draws on them so significantly.⁶⁰ If organizing for alterity is to benefit from other eyes and strange lands then maybe this is a tension that we must be prepared to accept. It seems to find resolution through embodied subjectivities of organizing, rather than in resolving the underlying theoretical debates which animate a small part of the community (and frame their collaborative practice).

7.2 Practices of organizing for alterity

The premise which frames #AlteritOrg's discourses and practices are expressed in Laloux's three breakthroughs: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose. They have distinctive implications for new, embodied subjectivities of organizing for alterity.

7.2.1 Self-management

Teal Organizations have found the key to operate effectively, even at a large scale, with a system based on peer relationships, without the need for either hierarchy or consensus.

Frederic Laloux (2014: 56)

Of Laloux's three "breakthroughs", it is self-management which has often attracted scholarly attention.⁶¹ Tom, contests these ideas, and seems to revel in provoking some discussion in the forum:

⁶⁰ I recall that Joe has previously stated: *Laloux is not an Integral theorist, and I know he is not trained in Spiral Dynamics.*

⁶¹ For different coverage of self-management in organizations, consider Kostera, 2014; Lee and Edmondson, 2017; Purser and Cabana, 1998.

But self-management has been tried so unsuccessfully on many occasions. I think it's crucial that people committing to it fully understanding what it means in practice—not just in theory.

[forum post by Tom]

Lucy joins in:

Yes!! There's a big difference between being self-managed and unmanaged . . .

[forum post by Lucy]

Ted too. He insists that self-management is a *holy grail* of organizing for alterity. He makes two key points:

Hey. (1) Self-management is natural. Ridding yourself of old ideas is key. (2) Self-management is about valuing information and freedom—taking responsibility for information and taking opportunity for learning.

[forum post by Ted]

This thread starts to attract some comments from the wider membership.

I am working with a medium-sized retailer to develop self-management in a number of their departments. We start by being honest about the 'management' needs, knowing that we might not always be able to fulfil them. Then we start to design a new 'management'. Again, honesty is important because we have to make choices. Intentional choices. Understanding the needs are and being honest about how we can (and cannot) fulfil them helps us design the best possible system.

[forum post by Julia]

I recognise that organizations are all different, and those differences need to be attended to. Self-management does that in a way regular management does not. The 'management' choices that are made come with implications for how organizations meet their needs—I don't think this is talked about enough.

[forum post by Graham]

Ted responds to Julia and Graham.

Hey Julia. Hey Graham. Thanks for adding your ideas. I think we're on the same page. Our job is not to find the perfect system. Our job is to find a system that meets the organization's needs in a sufficient way. From day 1 its asking 'what's best for us?'.
[forum post by Ted]

This discussion of self-management led me to reflect on a set of questions. Could self-management be scaled across large organizations? How do you navigate the challenges

that come with implementing self-management? How does self-management respond to staffing changes? Can self-management and traditional management coexist within the same organization? Does self-management make significant demands on your time, thus distracting from other activities? It seems that multiple responses are made to these questions across #AlteritOrg and to the challenges presented by a commitment to self-management, but they are wide-ranging and require contextual relevance to understand their adaption.

7.2.2 Wholeness

Organizations have always been places that encourage people to show up with a narrow 'professional' self and to check other parts of the self at the door. They often require us to show a masculine resolve, to display determination and strength, and to hide doubts and vulnerability. Rationality rules as king, while the emotional, intuitive, and spiritual parts of ourselves often feel unwelcome, out of place. Teal Organizations have developed a consistent set of practices that invite us to reclaim our inner wholeness and bring all of who we are to work.

Frederic Laloux (2014: 56)

An ongoing discussion of this passage prompted a range of responses. Jeff, opens the discussion with a statement:

I feel I've been living divided. Yearning for wholeness. Far too long. Parts of me argue with other parts, jostling to accommodate roles with different priorities. Does this resonate with you?

[forum post by Jeff, founder member and partner]

Patrick, a well-known member of the community shares:

I started thinking about this phenomenon a few years ago. I didn't understand was "not the done thing" to discuss stuff that was considered "too personal" for work. I still can't get used to this. The more people say this is unprofessional, the more I started to see it as a compliment. After all, it made my work relationships more personal and deep than the ones I could see around me.

[forum post by Patrick]

Away from the forum, in an interview, Kevin, an employer of about 120 people who is leading his company's transition to *Teal* observes to me:

Yeah, I notice that so many of us do this thing Laloux talks about—we 'carry a professional mask' to put on as we cross the company's doorstep. I don't feel this is

healthy for me, and conversations with people at different levels in my company lead me to think it isn't healthy for them.

[interview with Kevin]

Back on the forum, James starts another discussion about how wholeness can be understood on different levels:

We talk about wholeness, but how many people have stopped and thought about what that might mean for more than just the individual. We talk about wholeness for individuals within their organizational context? But what about wholeness for organizations as living, agentic systems, or wholeness for the world as in our connection with society and the environment?

[forum post by James]

Amongst a stream of responses are two, from Susan and Sarah, who note how the simplicity of wholeness might be a weakness, which encourages people to overlook the very challenging outcomes it is designed to produce.

I think you're right. Although it might be the simplest idea, I actually find that wholeness can be quite deadly . . . I've worked with a couple of Teal transitioning organizations who thought these wholeness practices should be presented as a check-list: I really tried to communicate to them it's not a question of ticking a series of wholeness boxes and that's it.

[forum post by Susan]

My feeling is that when I explain "wholeness" people misunderstand and think that it's about making them more potent. Isn't it the exact opposite? It creates a safe space to be weak and vulnerable without fear of judgement. That absolutely should be extrapolated across the organizational context and the wider environmental process.

[forum post by Sarah]

Susan and Sarah capture something of that tension that #AlteritOrg members experience when trying to actualise core breakthroughs. I ask them both privately whether they think a stronger theoretical grounding amongst members would encourage advocates of organizing for alterity to attend more closely to the demands of the implied behaviours and actions. They agree; it would not. In interview, Sarah explains:

What I think is important is to develop a breadth of experience in leading change or leading organizations of this sort. We need more practical examples. Written down would be a start, but we can be more imaginative than that. Why not videos,

documentaries, etc. And, best of all, the opportunity to experience model organizations at first hand. There just isn't that extensive resource at the moment.

[interview with Sarah]

Notions of wholeness bring forward a set of issues which demand careful consideration. I am led to more reflective questions. What makes us leave so much of our selfhood behind when we go to work? Can *Teal Organizations* create an environment in which people support each other in their inner work while doing the outer work of the organization? Does training everybody in ground rules that support healthy and productive collaboration deliver the wholeness it claims? What role for the wisdom traditions in the workplace? Can specific meeting practices help participants keep their egos in check and interact with each other from a place of wholeness? The conclusion reached by members of #AlteritOrg seems to be that self-management practices—whatever they are—help people to make people feel more “whole” in the workplace. (Whatever that means.)

7.2.3 Evolutionary purpose

Teal Organizations are seen as having a life and a sense of direction of their own. Instead of trying to predict and control the future, members of the organization are invited to listen in and understand what the organization wants to become, what purpose it will serve.

Laloux (2014: 56)

Again, joining an ongoing forum discussion illuminated ideas about evolutionary purpose. Karen, opens the discussion with a statement:

If we focus on what purpose can achieve (rather than get bogged down in a discussion that takes us round and around in circles), purpose is that quality of Teal that helps dismantle dominating organizational structures and reframe controlling egos. So, when I work with it, I find it important to bring it to life at an organizational, departmental, team, and individual level. This aligns purpose across all members and their activities.

[forum post by Karen]

Joe, who I have come to know well through our various discussions, adds:

I agree, Karen, with what you say purpose helps us to achieve. But I'd encourage you not to put up the barriers when it comes to thinking about the roots of purpose. Understanding Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory enhances

understanding of *Teal Organizing* and enables practitioners to handle it in a sophisticated way. Happy to talk about this at any time!

[forum post by Joe]

Later in the discussion, Sally contributes some of her practical experiences, including:

Speaking as someone who helps organizations transition to Teal, my experience suggests that we spend too much time thinking about designs and structures, trying to replace that thing Teal encourages us to strip away. For all our intervention, we don't succeed in creating an organization by anything other than creating the conditions in which organizing can emerge: these conditions are the living system in which purpose can thrive.

[forum post by Sally]

As with self-management, and wholeness, the discussions of evolutionary purpose oscillate between those who are preoccupied with its embeddedness within Integral discourses, and those whose focus is entirely practical. I am drawn, again, to a set of reflective questions; but I am most struck by a comment I overheard away from #AlteritOrg, recently:

Who has time in an organization to think about purpose?

7.3 A new subjectivity: a radical aesthetic?

The comment made by Adorno (1970: 37–8)—that since ‘aesthetic radicalism has shown itself to be socially affordable, radicalism itself must pay the price that it is no longer radical’—hints at a quest for a radical aesthetic which is, perhaps, perennial. Yet, amongst organizational scholars, the absence of a sharp line dividing what is ‘really radical’ from that which is ‘merely reformist’ (Adler, et al., 2007) allows some liberty when seeking to assess claims of radicalism. Similarly, this would be true for any claims made of radicalism in the context of #AlteritOrg. Responding to this quest for a radical aesthetic, Heyman, et al. (2014: 142) suggest that the radical response is to tackle the root cause of a problem, and to adopt a longer timescale over which the political choices made in the name of organizing orient toward ‘a more global sense of shared humanity’.

This empirical study demonstrates how #AlteritOrg seems to be addressing its identification of the *dawn of a new stage of consciousness*⁶² through the organizing subjectivity (or

⁶² Interview with Eric.

subjectivities) embodied by its members. The Teal paradigm views the organization as an independent agentic force with its own purpose. The premise for, and of, alterity advanced by Laloux, resources #AlteritOrg in confronting those current organizational arrangements that regard the organization as a vehicle for achieving management's objectives. And, that same premise resources #AlteritOrg in nourishing alternative organizational arrangements, which are brought together in a prefigurative embodiment of alterity. It cannot go unremarked that some members of #AlteritOrg become so enthused by the prospect of the alterity proposed by #AlteritOrg that they dive head-first into its practices without full consideration of the underlying principles. Others will take different views, each revealing their individual fondness for theory, practice, or both. Still, if the premise holds (that the core assumptions that lie at the root of current organizational arrangements are no longer fit for purpose holds) we should regard #AlteritOrg as bold, living experiment which supports a radically reframed approach to organizing for alterity.

I enjoyed a long discussion with Jeff about the long-term project that #AlteritOrg commits to. He tells me:

... we are not interested in the quick fix. There is something much more nourishing about our commitment to the future which cannot be achieved overnight. What things that are truly sustainable can be implemented immediately? The assumptions that we are rejecting, and the values we prefer to advocate, are deeply engrained in society. Transforming them is going to take a longer time than even I'd like to imagine.

[interview with Jeff, founder member and partner]

Jeff's worldview is not wholly unattractive. But it does seem rather fixed. I wonder if this is a quality associated with being radical. And I worry how much flexibility there is in his strong attachment to certain theoretical ideas to negotiate how #AlteritOrg supports other Teal Organizations who are at different stages of development or in other organizations committed to organizational renewal but diverging in some way from his core beliefs. I am still unsure how he can incorporate movements premised on organizational renewal but not in full alignment with his strong attachment to certain theoretical ideas. Few could argue with Jeff's personal approach to *amplifying human dignity in organizations* and his unswerving commitment to Teal principles and practices envisions a radical aesthetic. But, despite its radical claims, the embodied practice of #AlteritOrg appears underpinned by a shorter timeframe, responding to 'compelling instances of immediate human suffering'

(Heyman, et al., 2014) by way of small, incremental improvements to organizing. Julian claims:

I firmly believe we need to develop new mindsets. That way solutions can be developed away from the current norms. This is how we will make significant progress. If we start out from where we are today, we will simply get more of the same. At best, this means small, incremental progress. That really isn't what the world needs.

[forum post by Julian]

At the same time, facilitators like Natalia provide a call to action to those seeking immediate change:

I've been encountering many people who are wondering how to move from the current reality in their work to make incremental shifts to teal. I've put together a free teleclass that offers some practical support in this.

[forum post by Natalia]

The discussions, prompted by discourses of humanity and being human, traverse competing agendas of radical new subjectivities. Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociologies of regulation and radical change illustrate the pushes and pulls between conflict and consensus; these pushes and pulls are played out amongst #AlteritOrg members in ways which reinforce a plurality. Not in terms of its underlying premise, but definitely in terms of the embodied subjectivity it moves towards. #AlteritOrg members seem to tread a line which negotiates cohesion and contradiction in ways that I find difficult—reconciling with apparent ease the competing agendas of the short-term and the long-term and inhabiting such a flexible relationship with theory and practice.

7.4 Becoming #AlteritOrg

The trends to which #AlteritOrg responds align with the meta-constructs of globalisation and inequality (as suggested by Cheney, 2014) and corollary assumptions about organizations, capitalism, bureaucracy, power, and praxis. It claims *significant progress* in developing a new, formal legal structure⁶³ and in establishing a *Teal-appropriate business model* which can underwrite the financial viability of the community and facilitate some

⁶³ Similar alternative approaches to organizing have developed new legal structures, for example B Corporations have updated their articles of incorporation (<https://bcorporation.net/certification/legal-requirements>)

equity distribution amongst its partners and members. In the meantime, #AlteritOrg relies on donations, sponsors, affiliate partnerships, co-sponsorship of events, consulting teams, and various other income streams. Its organizational form (an online, community of practice) offers a fascinating site for focusing on the means and end/s of organizing. As a temporary outcome of organizing (Weick, 1995), and a quasi-stable structure (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), the lived reality of #AlteritOrg casts light on alternative principles and practices of organizing, signalling a recognition of the situated cognitive, political, and cultural dynamics of becoming (Pettigrew 1992). Furthermore, it frames these principles and practices as micro-interactions, in which co-constructed meaning might be productive (Tsoukas, 2009), or generative (Gergen and Gergen, 2004), and shaped by power relations (Thomas, et al. 2011). By observing, mapping, and analysing the principles and practices of #AlteritOrg—which have delivered a once quasi-stable structure—the data illuminate extant scholarship (and vice versa) to reveal attentional foci of approaches to organizing for alterity. Through the lived experience of new organizing subjectivities, members traverse the bridge between theory and practice to mutual benefit; each can inflect and influence the other. Organizing for alterity becomes subject to its own processes of becoming even if, in a Blochian sense, that alterity can never be regarded as condition of solid completedness. As best, the perpetual mutability, provisionality, activity, motion, and development of alterity might emit a foreglow of future possibilities; rather than suggesting finality or closure, #AlteritOrg offers somewhere in which humanity might flourish.

8. Findings: lines of flight

This chapter adopts a different approach from the two which precede it. In the representational quest which negotiates reality and expectation, attention turns to the reality of discourse(s) and practice(s), and the principles and practices of #AlteritOrg that are articulated and enacted. The result is a rhizomatic representation of a research site eschewing the more traditional arboreal model of knowledge. “Lines of flight” is selected as the chapter title to call to mind the creative nomadism of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Indeed, this analysis of #AlteritOrg moves beyond the monological tendencies of previous chapters to take up a telling which emphasises how things connect rather than how they are. This polylogical turn is central to a research position which seeks to advance knowledge about organizing for alterity in terms of becoming rather than being (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Consistent with a polyvocal telling of living stories (Boje, 2008)—in which each story is part of the other and makes the other story part of itself (Derrida, 1979)—a perspective on things as assemblages or multiplicities, rather than ontologically secure things, focuses attention on organizing rather than organization: on unfolding forces rather than static essences. This chapter emphasises a path of perpetual mutation, in which I show how #AlteritOrg becomes actualised by its members, and the extent to which this actualisation realises—in the capacities of members—new powers to act, respond, and re-actualise the community.

In this chapter, attention enters and exits at different points; and these human points of entry and exit (re)produce behaviours and actions which are constitutive of organizing. I recognise that this telling becomes a selective act—rather than a singularly interpretative act—in critical sympathy with the people whose practice represent attempts at becoming alterity. Interpretations, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), trace already established patterns of meaning; it is the act of selection, however, that maps lines of flight not readily perceptible to the dominant reality. I select specific entry and exit points (conversations, observations, consistencies, and inconsistencies) on the basis that they draw to attention the specific response to alterity (re)produced by #AlteritOrg. This chapter is offered, thus, as a map, hoping to elicit further maps, as well as further interpretations, from the reader; the prospect of further maps explicitly connects #AlteritOrg to a wider negotiation of reality and expectation which this thesis advances in its telling of a new organizing subjectivity.

8.1 Where organizing happens

Organization wants to happen . . . organizations emerge from processes that can be comprehended but never controlled.

Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (2012: 72)

The challenges associated with the disembodiment of an online research site are partly addressed by adopting a focus which seeks to identify where organizing happens. By focusing on where organizing happens, rather than any resultant form of organization, emphasis shifts to the processes ‘that can be comprehended but never controlled’ (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 2012: 72) as organizational being is (re)produced out of organizing. In the context of an online community, our gaze must traverse both the visible and invisible markers of organizing whilst, at the same time, our common perspectives on temporality, synchronicity, and rationality must sense and respond to an organizing architecture which recasts its relationships with time, order, and control. Thus, this chapter’s focus on where organizing happens tends towards articulating some degree of stability concerning those principles and practices which are constitutive of organizing within #AlteritOrg. The visible and invisible markers of organizing within this online community exhibit distinctive elements of interrelating theoretical and practical attention; this is reinforced by discourses which advance extant knowledge about *where* organizing happens and, furthermore, *what* organizing is.

Previous chapters describe how #AlteritOrg members share a set of ideas about where organizing happens and what organizing is, though these ideas are not uniformly adopted.

As “partners” we know our roles and responsibilities; within the community too, there is an emergent sense of roles and responsibilities. We organize according to a single shared goal—that is to nourish the growing ecosystem of Teal organizations. This means we each have things to do which connect up streams of work on organizational and social transformation.

[interview with Edie, founder member and partner]

As a newcomer, it isn’t totally obvious how I might become active. I guess I’d have to discuss this with one of the partners. I’m not sure of all the language that is used, and that can feel like a barrier to getting involved.

[interview with James]

It's not immediately obvious how this "self-management" works outside of what the partners talk about. The practical organizing ideas that are discussed . . . I don't think I see them in action. But I don't really think I know enough to judge.

[interview with Anna]

The different ways in which ideas are adopted is further evidenced by a variety of responses to questions such as, 'what it is like "being in" #AlteritOrg' or 'what things do you do in #AlteritOrg that you don't do in other settings?'.

This is a soulful place. Full of hope. You know, the work I do here doesn't actually feel like work.

[interview with Ted]

I'm curious about this community. That's why I joined. But I'm not sure how things get done.

[interview with Natalia]

I'm at my most productive when I'm working around #AlteritOrg—not because there's a clearly defined set of things I must do, but because I can use my energies to connect with other people and together, we achieve some exciting things.

[interview with Julia]

Nonetheless, it is possible to map a terrain that encompasses a plurality of ideas about where organizing happens and what organizing is, and for our gaze to fall upon something more profound about #AlteritOrg, and about organizing for alterity, that is revealed by its principles and practices.

Sharing is described, by Karen (who has established herself a key figure in the community), as having a dual meaning:

The whole idea of 'sharing' really is central to 'being' #AlteritOrg. It has a dual meaning to me: on one hand 'sharing' is about having things in common, and on the other hand it's about freely giving your experiences and expertise to help develop the community.

[interview with Karen]

I pick on her comment that *it has a dual meaning to me*. I ask her about how she negotiates this dual meaning for herself, and she responds:

Doing brings to life those things we share. We share a commitment, for example, to explicitly link everything we do to the articulation of our purpose: so, doing is about getting done what actually needs to be done. Add to this that we share a belief that people can do things for themselves, and that—with the right conditions—we should always think about trying new things.

[interview with Karen]

Karen is amongst the most experienced member of the community in terms of organizing for alterity in external organizations. She articulates ideas about ‘sharing’ and ‘doing’ succinctly and, when I chat with her further, I learn that as part of her professional practice away from #AlteritOrg, she uses these ideas to help transform organizational processes. She is comfortable with language and using it to *craft individual and collective understanding*.

Look. You will always find actual activity in sharing and doing. If groups are serious about preparing to be less-hierarchical then ‘sharing’ is the way to help them break down how they’ve previously done ‘thinking’—which is a much more isolated activity. And if groups are serious about becoming less hierarchical then they need to adopt a ‘doing’ mindset, and a doing mindset that has people do things in the here and now to make it happen. [...] Yes. I suppose organizing is about sharing and doing—exactly that.

[interview with Karen]

Her words resonate with some other participants’ contributions, so we might plausibly find tangible evidence of organizing for alterity amidst examples of members of the community “sharing things” and “doing things”. This chapter examines how shared beliefs translate into organizing activity that conditions the community, and how this enables the community to try to live beyond the control and command paradigm, embodying and prefiguring the future that it claims as its own. It also examines how these beliefs are explicitly represented in things getting done, in promoting agency and agility in its members, and placing shared value on trying new things.

8.1.1 Being in, and being out

#AlteritOrg was established as community of practice though, more recently, some have chosen to incorporate a commitment to ‘transformation’: thus, a transformative

community of practice.⁶⁴ The nature of a community of practice, sets out some expectations of where organizing happens: ‘communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, et al., 1980: 2002). Expectations of organizing, as a community of practice, refer to a mutual engagement (e.g. advancing the renewal of organizations), a joint enterprise (e.g. supporting those engaged in its work), and a shared repertoire (e.g. emerging discourse and practice). I asked two founder members about being part of a community of practice and, specifically, what motivated them to embark on becoming #AlteritOrg in this form.

The concept of community of practice is influencing theory and practice in many domains. It has now become the foundation of a perspective on knowing and learning that informs efforts to create learning systems in various sectors and at various levels of scale, from local communities, to single organizations, partnerships, cities, regions, and the entire world. The collective is a very powerful perspective to take on knowledge.

[interview with Jeff, founder member and partner]

The idea of the community of practice has been adopted most readily by people in business because of the recognition that knowledge is a critical asset that needs to be managed strategically. Initial efforts at managing knowledge had focused on information systems with disappointing results. Communities of practice provided a new approach, which focused on people and on the social structures that enable them to learn with and from each other.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

Their comments emphasise how a community of practice is more than *a loose association of friends* or *a network of people*.⁶⁵ Members share a specific domain of interest which defines its identity. Being a member of #AlteritOrg implies a shared commitment and a shared competence; such that shared organizing takes place around this shared domain of interest.⁶⁶ Members pursue the interests which define their domain within a community: this is done through sharing in activities, discussions, endeavours, and information.

⁶⁴ Transformative Communities of Practice embody the same three dimensions (domain, community, practice) that a traditional CoP does, but at a new, higher turn of the spiral, due to vertical development being at their centre. <http://www.ideasunlimited.com/uncategorised/the-future-of-leadership-development-part-one-of-four/>.

⁶⁵ Interview with Pascal, #AlteritOrg member working in ‘transformational team coaching’.

⁶⁶ I wonder about the incompetent. Are they to be excluded alongside the uncommitted?

Although there might be no expectation of daily interaction, being a member of #AlteritOrg requires you to build relationships. Relational organizing seems crucial to participating in its joint activities and discussions, by helping each other, and sharing knowledge and resources; relational organizing underlies the interaction and learning that takes place together. Interaction and learning are expressly practice-oriented: so, being a practitioner (at least to some degree) seems a logical requirement of being a member, as is engaging in developing resources and committing to a shared practice. By developing a shared practice, members of the community enhance the community's ability to advance its domain of interest: organizing for alterity is undertaken so that this becomes embedded as principle and practice within the #AlteritOrg.

On many occasions, the question 'what is it like for you "being in" #AlteritOrg?' proved a useful entrée to gathering personal and professional reflections which help frame a specific understanding about where organizing happens and what organizing is. This underlines that, despite the emphasis on shared interaction and learning, the experiences of individual members within #AlteritOrg are very different.

I like it. We get things done very happily and very effectively. It's such a rewarding space.

[interview with Naji]

To be honest, I don't have much of an active connection with the group; but I really like some of the resources they share.

[interview with Josephny]

With so many people coming together from so many different backgrounds its quite startling how quickly we find common ground.

[interview with Beka]

I haven't quite grasped the particular dynamics of the group, about who does what, who says what, and what it all means. It's a reminder that we interpret being self-organized in lots of different ways.

[interview with Luke]

I've never been part of a group before that I feel so supported by. Nothing is too much trouble for people when I ask.

[interview with Lisa]

My own experience of “being in” #AlteritOrg leads me to acknowledge how organizing is something that happens between people: for this community it is predominantly relational, which I understand in terms of an engagement, an enterprise, and a repertoire that is shared. Members earn their right to membership through complying with requests to contribute to the community. Having attempted that myself, and rather than being expressly situated, or embodied, a multiplicity of shared communication streams opens the way for me, for example, to organize conversations and interviews. This does not require me to observe specific new systemic protocols; I must simply continue to engage in two-way communication that meets the needs of the members concerned in terms of sharing engagement, enterprise, and repertoire.

A conversation with James further highlights the shared nature of organizing. His experience of #AlteritOrg organizing similarly has no requirement of specific systems or protocols.

A group of three of us were setting up a webinar to present an article we had recently published online. We chatted with [an #AlteritOrg partner] who had been aware of our work for some time; we added him to the slack channel we regularly use to communicate on this project—and the website and forum moderators too—so they could see what was being discussed, help connect up our work, and we just got on with it.

[interview with James]

Understanding specific organizational outcomes help focused my attention: for me, engaged in fieldwork, it was setting up interviews according to the needs of individual members; and, for James, it was setting up a webinar to develop a new project. In these cases, specific outcomes acted as focal points to the organizing process. And, in these instances, where things are shared, where relationships are developed, and where outcomes are envisioned and pursued, organizing happens and new organizational subjectivities emerge.

Organizing happens in those communicative acts between members that transform sharing to doing. In the two sub-chapters which follow, I explore how sharing things creates principle-led, communicative acts of structuring [8.2] whilst doing things creates practice-led, communicative acts of purpose [8.3]. In these acts, which are representative in

themselves of organizing, political acts of organizing are (re-)produced, ensuring that “being in” #AlteritOrg is aligned with its goals: that being, *to nourish the growing ecosystem of Teal organizations by connecting streams of work on organizational and social transformation*.⁶⁷ Again, this serves as both a means and an end—inextricably linked in the future they prefigure.

8.2 Sharing things

Sharing is about being something together, becoming something together, and having that journey in common.

[email exchange with Samantha]

As a participant-observer in this netnography I committed to “sharing things” with other #AlteritOrg members. Many of the arguments for and against adopting this research position are explored in the theoretical chapter on critical performativity, but the lines of flight which map “organizing as sharing things” within #AlteritOrg reveal some of the specific tensions that arose from the study. Specifically, they identify those moments when I felt uncomfortable sharing things, or when my interpretation of the things being shared seem to differ significantly from the received wisdom of the community.

To contextualise these lines of flight, I refer to the upper portion of the data structure which presents the “principles of organizing for alterity” dimension. This chapter enriches understanding of the 1st order concepts and 2nd order themes that relate to this dimension; I acknowledge that, as a participant observer, I take some responsibility for legitimising and advancing their development within #AlteritOrg. Firstly, of these four themes, members share common ground in terms of their commitment to *organizational purpose*. They articulate multiple responses to the nature of purpose and whilst this is a contested issue across #AlteritOrg the wider notion of sharing purpose attracts my broad sympathies. Purpose, at a more abstract reading than many #AlteritOrg members prefer, can create communities who share common values and commitments. Secondly, they share common ground in terms of *collaborative leadership*. This theme encapsulates leadership which is shared and derived from moral (rather than formal) authority, organizational purpose and values which are embodied, and a culture in which

⁶⁷Interview with Anna, founder member.

responsibility exists with the individual to enable the other to thrive. Thirdly, they share common ground in terms of *freedom and trust*. Thematically, this incorporates a workforce which does not need extensive control, and rebalancing of the employer/employee relationship such that responsibility, risk, and reward are more equitably shared, and that autonomy and accountability can support a workplace in which relaxed productivity represents a commitment to healthy working practices. Finally, they share common ground in terms of *transparency*. Under this heading there is a commitment to making information available to the right person at the right time as a foundation of accurate and timely decision-making, and a culture of ‘ask anything’ to promote openness across the organization.

On this common ground, I shared in the day-to-day business of #AlteritOrg as they sought to enact these principles of organizing. I saw in these principles plenty of light and shade; ideas are contested, opinions are policed, and the core beliefs of this version of organizing for alterity are protected. In the process, “sharing things” re-produces the identity of #AlteritOrg by engaging members in shared acts which reproduce both principles and practices informed by those principles. (A monologous telling of “sharing things” would simply serve to restore descriptive detail to the principles and practices reduced by analysis to concepts, themes, and dimensions.) Now, three specific lines of flight structure what follows: conditioning the community, living beyond control, and embodying becoming. As I draw on empirical data to map the map multiple responses to #AlteritOrg’s shared organizing principles, attention is directed towards the unfolding forces which emphasise organizing as a process of becoming and illuminate those lines of flight not readily perceptible to the dominant reality. My intention is that they represent the nature of discourses and practices and traverse the concepts and themes of captured in the data structure, to enhance the polylogic telling of this alterity.

8.2.1 Conditioning the community

The classic articulation of a community of practice requires members to share in its identity, participate in building its resources, and to be practically engaged in its outcomes. #AlteritOrg emphasises how this delivers on its transformative ambitions; instituting its principles of organizing for alterity as capable of redefining both its environment and its direction.

After an interview, I had a follow-up email exchange with David.

As a CoP #AlteritOrg takes up four commitments. 1. To exchange and interpret knowledge. 2. To order this knowledge in accessible ways. 3. To be responsible for its own competencies. 4. To be a home for those who identify with its goals. This requires internal and external focus. Internally, we build knowledge from our core resources and experiences. Externally, we interact with ‘outsiders’ to keep our core resources from becoming insular or isolated, and to expand our experiences.

[email exchange with David]

I came to understand that sharing things is part of that continuous process of “becoming #AlteritOrg”. One way this is achieved is through *building a belief in the community*⁶⁸ by encouraging new members to share their needs and exchange reciprocal offerings with others.

A forum post (presented previously) records some of these efforts.

Dear members. You are invited to become present in #AlteritOrg. How did you arrive in our community? What are your passions? Do you have questions? Do you bring hopes to fulfil? What can we offer to you, and what can you offer to us? Please share about yourselves so we might know you better. And consider your reply to this post as your first gift to #AlteritOrg.

[forum post by Maja, community forum moderator]

Many newcomers introduce themselves in this thread; I keep a close watch on their arrivals looking at the socialisation processes they encounter. My attention is drawn to a new member, Juan, who experiences a disciplining response to the introduction he made of himself which expressed his interest in the wider themes and practices of the *alternative movement*.⁶⁹

Please note. . . we don’t want to be yet another of the 100s of ‘movements of all movements’; our purpose is expressly focused on people working in the field of next-stage organizations, responsive organizations, and the like . . .

[forum post by Jeff, founder member and partner]

⁶⁸ Interview with Ted.

⁶⁹ Interview with Juan.

I believed the position of #AlteritOrg was to nourish the wider ecosystem, but Juan's enthusiasms for alterity are given a clear sense of boundaries in this exchange. Jeff jumps in and is quick to situate #AlteritOrg's practice and name its purpose. This is interesting: "purpose" is a key constitutive device of #AlteritOrg which disciplines as well as inspires. It establishes some sense of boundaries in this disembodied online space and situates the community's discourse and practice. And so, providing a cognitive frame for organizing for alterity, it is deserving of some closer inspection. Purpose is used within #AlteritOrg to give the community form and meaning; as a stable construct to provide a lens that allows individuals to see and understand the situation. However, purpose is a contested concept which is subject to a range of interpretations and uses; and this causes some tension within #AlteritOrg.

Amongst its interpretations and uses, a workplace can be purpose-driven:

We focus on building a purpose-driven workplace around common values; creating energy, passion, and meaning for people in and around the organization.

[forum post by Sandi]

And, individuals can have purpose:

Not all work has to have deep meaning, but there needs to be some sense of how it contributes to an individual's own purpose.

[forum post by Linda]

Maybe the tension arises from Laloux's brand of purpose: "evolutionary purpose".

... evolutionary purpose is not the same as a vision statement. A vision statement usually reflects the ego-driven state of consciousness of the management team, who decide what they want the organization to be. The evolutionary purpose of a Teal organization reflects the deeper reason the organization exists.

[http://reinventingorganizationswiki.com/Evolutionary_Purpose]

This brand of purpose reflects a deeper tension, implicit in which is that individuals neither own nor run the organization; they are, instead, *stewards, who listen and enable the organization's purpose to be flourish*⁷⁰. This intellectual leap is met with resistance by different advocates of organizing for alterity. Nixon (2017) leads an assault against

⁷⁰ Interview with Pascal.

evolutionary purpose, arguing '[a]n organisation isn't a separate soul or entity with its own purpose, it's a story of an idea which is gradually becoming reality. An idea ultimately held by one individual author.' This is a persistent argument across #AlteritOrg which appears and reappears in different guises. Ultimately, it's resolution might reduce to a single question of faith: if we refuse to make that intellectual leap which ascribes evolutionary—or fully agentic—purpose to an organization, then who is the real agent of purpose? And to whom does purpose belong?

This question of purpose and, specifically, evolutionary purpose raises hackles amongst the most evangelical members. In hushed tones, a critique of *Reinventing Organizations* is passed around certain parts of #AlteritOrg; through a conversation offline, I get passed a copy by Sally. The author has reservations about *Teal Organizing*: he describes Laloux's work as 'a deeply problematic and flawed book' (Hassan, 2015) and identifies a series of internal scientific, contextual, and ethnocentric contradictions. (At this point in the story, however, the noteworthy observation is that I was passed this discretely, and that this dissenting view was not considered suitable for sharing publically.) I am told that #AlteritOrg partners *would not appreciate this critique* being shared openly. Although I suspect I know, I ask Sally why:

I think the founders can be quite touchy about this sort of thing. I was writing an article recently which I showed to one of them and was asked to remove a sentence which they didn't think 'was in the spirit' of Laloux's 'generous and giving' work.

[Skype conversation with Sally]

I am intrigued by this. So, as we chat some more, I press her to see if she will open up about her own feelings about the founders' behaviours.

I know that this sounds permissive but . . . I don't think I would do it myself if I was in their position, but I sort of understand why they do because they are trying to build something new here and those negative voices can be very destructive.

[Skype conversation with Sally]

'Do you worry if they are right to ask you to remove from the text your response to alternative organizing?', I ask.

Hmm. Yes. I do worry. But what is perfect? This is a practical framework for organizing that I find really convincing. There may be arguments to be had with minutiae of the detail, but that's just the way it is. Isn't it?

[Skype conversation with Sally]

I say I don't think that is the way it is. We agree to leave this unresolved. Towards the end of the interview, Sarah returns to this element of our conversation. She says:

Look. I respect where you're coming from as a researcher. Many people set out just to find problems with Teal organizations, but I don't think you are one of them. I think Teal sets us on a journey to develop organizations, and more than that communities and societies for the better. It might not be spelled out perfectly in the book, but we can work on that.

[Skype conversation with Sally]

I hold back and do not respond. Though, what I want to make clear is that I feel uncomfortable with the normative prescription of organizing for alterity as outlined in Laloux's book, the 'conditioning' of the community by (some) of the dominant figures, and the silencing of dissenting voices; surely, these factors seem to jar against the wider claims of "sharing things" as part of the community's purpose.

8.2.2 Living beyond control?

One of the landmark organizations that is often referred to by #AlteritOrg members is FAVI. A harbinger of the alternative organizing movement, its figurehead, Jean-François Zobrist, believes that *mankind [sic.] is good* and that *by and large, people can be trusted*.⁷¹ His work is referred to in reverential terms of its historical precedent for reducing command and control structures and in advancing the autonomy and responsibility of individuals and teams. The reduction of control structures and the advance of individual responsibility are key drivers of *Teal Organizing*.

The hierarchical 'predict and control' pyramid . . . is replaced with a decentralized structure consisting of small teams that take responsibility for their own governance and for how they interact with other parts of the organization.

⁷¹ See Zobrist (2018).

[http://reinventingorganizationswiki.com/Teal_Organizing]

I find within #AlteritOrg, there is some evidence to suggest that reducing control requires quite careful handling. In considering how the community is conditioned, I thought about how new members were brought into line by founder members. On the face of it, these examples may appear small scale, but I sense the ripple this causes through a community making claims to self-management to be much larger. Emerging from this unresolved—and possibly unresolvable—relationship between organization, its founders/leaders, and its vision/purpose, are questions about what level of control should be used to bring members into line, and to *hold the space*.

Moving on, I try to explore some of the practical implications of living beyond control. I note a comment made by a Susan about jobs/roles:

. . . jobs, as you might traditionally understand them are replaced with a multiplicity of roles, often self-selected and fluid

[interview with Susan]

I hear about this a lot, and so I pose a general question to the forum: ‘Can you help me? I understand that roles (are distinct from jobs) and that they are often self-selected . . . how does this actually work without some sort centralised overview of what is being done?’ On cue, the faithful responses arrive:

. . . who is to say that a centralised view would be the most informed? The people dealing with work in the here and now best understand its requirements. Having to communicate that ‘upwards’ and then have that information interpreted by someone else is time consuming and however skilled they are is flawed.

[forum post by Chris, founder member]

Our actions do not need to be guided by orders from someone higher up the chain of command, We . . . or you . . . can make these decisions by listening to the organization’s purpose

[forum post by Edie, founder member and partner]

Their claims of living beyond control emphasise individual responsibility for the collective. *If something needs doing, then you do it,*⁷² I am told; *seek advice from others if you need additional expertise*⁷³ is a common refrain, but the message is clearly, *you know your work better than anybody, you know yourself better than anybody*⁷⁴ and *by being true to your purpose and your organization's purpose you will do great things.*⁷⁵ (I cannot pretend that, at least on the surface, these are not attractive propositions.)

Reducing control might be more comfortably located in performative expressions of the community (rather than articulated in its theoretical arguments which are more problematic). #AlteritOrg places value on sharing things, particularly in terms of its theoretical arguments; but it is “doing things” that attracts its plaudits from across the community. Those who demonstrate a prefigurative practice are held up as examples of being *freed from unconscious assumptions about people, their motivations, their role in the world, and the meaning of life.*⁷⁶ These assumptions, it is maintained, *lie at the root of destructive organizational models and practices*⁷⁷ which #AlteritOrg set out to transcend in their “next stage” discourse(s) and practice(s).

But, #AlteritOrg is not without its levers of control; newcomers are subject to a degree of onboarding. I recall my own experiences in which I was informed of the expectation that I would make some sort of contribution to the community. *Teal Organizations* boast how they invest significant time in *welcoming and training new colleagues.*⁷⁸ And, a popular online wiki has the following advice:

Best way to avoid disruptive tensions is to have a steady intake of new colleagues and avoiding very large groups of new people starting at once . . . make sure you select a mix of practices that not only appeal to the rational, but also touch the heart and the soul of new colleagues.

[<http://www.reinventingorganizationswiki.com/Onboarding>]

⁷² Interview with Lucy.

⁷³ Interview with George.

⁷⁴ Interview with Graham.

⁷⁵ Interview with Joe.

⁷⁶ Interview with Joe.

⁷⁷ Interview with Claude.

⁷⁸ Interview with Edie, founder member and partner.

In evaluating the different tensions that exist, it is difficult to escape that light cast by evolutionary purpose which conceptualises organizations as having a life and a sense of direction of their own and invites members of the organization to listen in and understand what the organization wants to become. I try to explore this with different members:

The biggest change since 'going Teal' is that I don't feel 'watched' anymore . . . Well, yes, I am watched, but not in a controlling or disciplinary way.

[interview with Caroline]

I don't feel the need to control other people in the organization. This really surprises me, because I used to be a terrible micro manager.

[interview with Susan]

Their comments suggest experiences in line with the community's hope-filled commitment to life beyond command and control structures. However, this is not necessarily the free-living community one might assume; a shared set of values and beliefs still influence behaviours and actions in ways which embed purpose as a significant unifying device.

[this] suggests transforming personal relationships, through new processes of decision-making and action-taking. I think this is what reduces the need for the organization to have a 'tight grip' in a traditional sense.

[interview with Miguel]

I want to know if 'tight grip' is there; whether they have experienced anything like that. Does control exist in another form?

No. We don't need control. Purpose is our North Star.

[interview with Miguel]

Unconvinced, I resolve to ask others. I receive similar responses. With conviction in a *shared point of reference*⁷⁹ or *North Star*⁸⁰, members can *develop flexible structures that make sense for the work [they] do*⁸¹. In terms of workplace transformation, this means that:

... people must think for themselves and purpose leads them to align behaviours and actions that contribute to organizational value.

[interview with Jamil]

And, amongst the prominent members this is a strongly held commitment:

If I gave one piece of advice, it would be “get rid of all activities that don’t support your purpose”.

[forum post by Sarah]

I confess that the onslaught of purpose leaves me cold. I think I would be regarded as a bad community member if I shared this, because I don’t just feel antipathy towards this conceptualisation of evolutionary purpose: I feel increasing hostility. My probing of different participants’ responses to purpose is enlightening. Those who don’t fully embrace the idea of the organization as *an independent energy field*⁸² seem to regard purpose as a curiosity, rather than any mechanism of control. Theoretical underpinnings quickly give way to practical implications. The challenge, perhaps, lies in understanding how to balance principled belief and the realities of practice. Either way, there is something about becoming #AlteritOrg which is qualitatively different from mainstream expectations of other organizations and communities.

8.2.3 Embodying becoming

In attending to what is shared by the #AlteritOrg community, and how a reduction of control is envisioned and enacted, this chapter raises some questions which emerge from the underpinnings of *Teal Organizing*. By allowing that gentle drift towards how things are done, the intention has been to see how these questions of principle resolve themselves in how members actualise becoming #AlteritOrg. Embodying the purpose of #AlteritOrg is a

⁷⁹ Interview with Julian.

⁸⁰ Interview with Susan.

⁸¹ Interview with Jackie.

⁸² Interview with Jackie.

key part of the community's discourse; those who occupy the most prominent positions and have the loudest voices are those who (seek to) convince most of their embodiment of this brand of alterity.

Analysis points to how the core breakthroughs of *Teal Organizing* become central to the individual as well as the collective. There is a sense that individuals understand more about themselves and their lives as a result of these core breakthroughs, and through sharing this with others they build a collective which is a strong and alterious reality. Through self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose, #AlteritOrg connects with a set of behaviours and actions which are constitutive of these individual and collective processes of organizing, and their shared enactment embodies a process of organizational becoming. This set of behaviours and actions are seen in the data structure: organizational purpose, collaborative leadership, freedom and trust, and transparency.

I ask four #AlteritOrg members (who also identify expressly as *Teal* practitioners) to reflect on these principles:

My recent work with [company] has involved a focus on developing qualitative measures. We need to hear stories about what matters to people. What's their purpose? We need stories about their wellbeing, their meaning-making, their commitment to renewing their organization, and their successes.

[interview with Sandi]

I describe working in the Teal paradigm as like collaborative gardening. Our human relationships are connected through networks that act much like the roots of plants. Information becomes distributed through the system, and novelty lies in the relationships—not in the information. This is where the unexpected blooms.

[interview with Edie, founder member and partner]

I prioritise developing trust: trust that people are good and hold good intentions; trust that you are doing the right thing; trust that you have the capacity to work solutions for whatever problems will stand between you and your goal. Trust that people you hire have competence and capacity, can take responsibility and organise themselves in the best way.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

Transparency is key. Both in honest self-reflection as an individual and in mutual interactions. Information needs to be free to be of true value. Too much information can be managed with focus and prioritization; too little can be lethal.

[interview with Claude]

These reflections help stabilise the principles this thesis identifies as indicative of organizing for alterity. We seek stability. And with it, the questions that remain unanswered around the theoretical underpinning of *Teal Organizing* are momentarily swept away by the seduction of a collective activity which brings alterity to life.

8.3 Doing things

Doing is about bringing to life those things you share—the structures, processes, and actions which capture the essence of what it is you believe in and hope for.

[email exchange with Samantha]

In my role as participant-observer, I also committed to “doing things” with other #AlteritOrg members. This went beyond engaging in discussion, to include attending events, contributing my own written ideas to their publications, and being involved in the transformative work of the community. Again, the arguments surrounding this research position are explored in the theoretical chapter and, as per the previous sub-chapter on “sharing things”, the lines of flight which map “organizing as doing things” within #AlteritOrg illuminate the practice of organizing for alterity. They pinpoint those moments of tension, where I felt my presence in the community legitimated a set of practices, I was uncomfortable with or compromised their ability to pursue their own organizational purpose.

I return to the data structure, and the lower portion which leads to the “principles of organizing for alterity” dimension. In doing this, I draw attention to the four remaining themes and again acknowledge that, as a participant observer, I take some responsibility for legitimising and advancing their development within #AlteritOrg. Firstly, of these four themes, members describe how they share common ground in terms of their commitment to structuring organizations as *networked structures*. This serves as a rejection of the rigid, hierarchical pyramid structures, in favour of forming and re-forming multi-disciplinary teams within networks which are created and re-created to serve locally accountable goals. Secondly, they share common ground in terms of *role-based activity*. This theme encapsulates the allocation of work according to roles, on the basis that this encourages

diversity, respects talents, and raises motivation. Thirdly, they share common ground in terms of *localised decision-making*. Thematically, this incorporates decisions being made at the point at which maximum knowledge is held; it fuels organizational agility to respond to changing events and distributes agency more evenly across the organization. Finally, they share common ground in terms of *experimentation and adaption*. Under this heading there is a commitment to identifying change as a daily occurrence, and not an annual event. As such, experimentation and adaptation become core competencies at all levels of the organization, which stimulate the continued development of principles and practices.

I use three further headings, What needs getting done [8.3.1], Believing in agility [8.3.2], and Trying new things [8.3.3] in order to traverse the concepts and themes of captured in the data structure and, again, to enhance the polylogic telling of this alterity.

8.3.1 What needs getting done

Within a framing of “sharing things”, #AlteritOrg quietly advance a set of individual and collective competences which support their claims of self-management: these include various commitments to *reflection, quiet-mind skills, perspective-taking, sensing, and paying attention to what we pay attention to*.⁸³ Furthermore, in support of wholeness, these competences extend to incorporate *conflict resolution, intuition and imagination, generative listening, and managing the distribution of one’s attention and energy across a multiple roles*.⁸⁴ Above all, Cheryl insists that this brand of #AlteritOrg alterity relies on *caring for the wellbeing of all aspects of a diversity, aligning them functionally into a working system*.⁸⁵

Caring and *wellbeing* seem appropriate words to my experiences of the community. I noted this repeatedly in my reflective diaries. And, despite those moments where I detect an unhealthy attempt to exert control, or a fallacious argument being made on shaky ground, my overwhelming impression is of a community which places value on self-care and a healthy respect for others.

⁸³ These are noted from my daily observation of the community.

⁸⁴ These were noted from my daily observation of the community and later explored in my reflective diaries.

⁸⁵ Interview with Cheryl, founder member and partner.

Jeff described to me some of his previous workplaces. He worked in a corporate organizational environment, predominantly in middle management roles. His emphasis seemed to shift to the waste and neglect he experienced in these settings.

I don't think the corporation is quite the model of efficiency that they'd have you believe. I regularly saw work completed which was unnecessary—either because business had changed but the allocation of work hadn't, or because work was carried out, but it was simply never followed up on.

[interview with Jeff, founder member and partner]

He went on to explain how, in terms of his new role for an organization committed to organizational renewal, the focus was entirely different.

For us, it's about getting done what needs to be done. The way this is achieved is by having everybody responsible for the decisions about what is needed—those who are closest to the action are inevitably going to know best about what must get done . . . not just that, about when, where, and how.

[interview with Jeff, founder member and partner]

I still labour over understanding how “getting done what needs to be done” might be scalable. Empirical research does not connect us with exemplars of organizing for alterity on a large or interconnected scale, yet the claims often associated with it are in terms of its agility and connectivity across times, places, and spaces. Prodding around, others help me:

Don't get too hung up on this. You see how things work around here. It's the communicative processes that are so strong: people are happy to work together, to ask for advice, and to try things out. Knowing that they are your basic parameters allows you to go off and get things done. We are becoming quite a hub of productivity at #AlteritOrg—this has implications for #AlteritOrg and for the many other organizations that link to and through us.

[Skype conversation with Sally]

The transition away from centralised control, towards distributed decision-making (underpinned by distributed authority) suggests significant practical implications. Keen to understand how this might work, I asked Sabine to offer her thoughts about how this works in practice.

Firstly, someone notices a problem or opportunity; it is up to them to take the initiative or ask someone better placed to do it.

[interview with Sabine]

(I had noticed this a few times within the #AlteritOrg setting. A member would say something like, 'I notice we have very little video content available. I'm interested in helping develop this, would anyone else with editing skills like to assist?' And things would start to happen.)

'What makes someone better placed?', I ask.

It might relate to the person being closer to the problem or opportunity; or to them having a more appropriate set of skills to deal with it, or just more appropriate to their role within the group.

[interview with Sabine]

(Again, I was able to recall those invitations to contribute: those leading on the publications might put out a call for someone with experience of integrative decision making to write an article; or those leading on expanding #AlteritOrg coverage in other countries might ask for help with connections or introductions to new networks. These invitations always seemed very quickly taken up by 'someone better placed'.)

She continues, by explaining how within her organization prospective actions are presented as proposals, to achieve consensus and to legitimate work.

Prior to a proposal, the decision-maker may seek input to gather perspectives before proposing action. Then the initiator makes a proposal and seeks advice from those affected or those with expertise. Taking this advice into account, the decision-maker decides on an action and informs those who have given advice. There's a difference between being self-managed and un-managed. Instead of the traditional boss getting advice and suggestions from people below, the decision maker, who is almost always not an official leader, seeks advice from leaders and from peers. Usually, the decision maker is the person whose area is most affected, who initiated an idea, discovered a problem, or saw an opportunity. If it is unclear who the decision maker should be, the leader selects an individual to gather advice and make the final decision.

[interview with Sabine]

There seem to be no end of practical tools and resources for developing organizing for alterity practice; so much so that the underlying tensions that surface when discussing theoretical underpinnings temporarily disappear. For a community of practice, embodying mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire, #AlteritOrg gives some clear indications that it is focused on getting done what needs getting done. When it comes to doing things, this is a community which comes to life.

When I reflect on my experiences of being a member of #AlteritOrg, and being part of them “doing things”, I cannot help but compare to those email requests that come around from university colleagues soliciting help. How often, I presume, many of their pleas go unanswered? But to each request for advice and support within #AlteritOrg comes a consistent stream of positive responses. Not always offering the help that is requested; but hearing the concern and amplifying it. Not from the same few voices; but from an ever-increasing set of names. Replies like this:

Perhaps this summary might help you [*attaches external web link]

[forum post by Ian]

Yeah, this talks to me and matches our experience in [company]. Once we let people decide what made sense for them to improve and did it iteratively with test and learn . . . instead of telling them to do this process or that process . . . it had real impact.

[forum post by Max]

Happy to help. I have some experience with virtual collaboration. Would that be of interest? Can we connect via Skype later this week? PS Mel—have you seen this?

[forum post by Jiro]

And from these responses new possibilities emerge. Very often, a partner will jump in: *would you be interested to put your skill to use in this community, right here?*⁸⁶

Again. The community is not shy in asking for members to—freely—give.

⁸⁶ I have observed this call-to-action countless times, from Jeff, Chris, and Edie. Assuming this was a conscious agreement to encourage interaction and engagement I asked Edie about this, who confirmed I was right. “I think it’s extremely effective at linking member’s skills to the work that needs taking on”, she said.

In this emergent dynamic, #AlteritOrg members demonstrate a shared and growing competence to respond to problems or opportunities thrown at them, from a perspective larger than their 'small self.' It becomes, according to Jackie, *a dance*. #AlteritOrg work is no longer work that is *devoid of passions, emotions, sympathies, aversions, and other attributes of being human*. It is all this; and it can boast *a collaborative shaping of the organization's work* and be transformative of *the human being's experience of life and work*.⁸⁷

8.3.2 Believing in agility

A common theme amongst those examples of organizing for alterity is of greater agility. Agility is needed, some would argue, *to respond to emergent possibilities*⁸⁸ which stem from *greater connectivity*⁸⁹ and *the dual spirit of collaboration and autonomy*⁹⁰ in which people *experiment and adapt to changing conditions*⁹¹. Corporate Rebels, a group of agitators for organizational alterity, claim:

Progressive organizations know the familiar pyramid is outdated. It simply does not fit today's fast-changing environment. The rigidity of command-and-control does not promote agility, speed, and engagement. Which is why we find progressive organizations adopting alternative structures. Typically, they turn the rigid pyramid into an agile network of teams.

[<https://corporate-rebels.com/movements-to-watch/>]

#AlteritOrg discourses identify the significance of the speed of change, rather than change itself, as the driver of agility.

Markets have been changing since the Industrial Revolution. Companies have been empowering staff as a driver of productivity since Drucker and Deming. But, today change is happening faster than ever before.

[forum post by Max]

Sarah adds:

⁸⁷ Interview with Jackie.

⁸⁸ Interview with Jackie.

⁸⁹ Interview with Jiro.

⁹⁰ Interview with Max.

⁹¹ Interview with Sandi.

Thanks. The points I make with my clients is that agility comes in different flavours. There's structural agility which allows the organization to adapt. There's emotional agility which is seen in relationships inside and outside the organization. And there's practical agility which develops organizational learning and individual skills.

[forum post by Sarah]

Discussion continues, developing ideas about networked structure of organizations, focusing on a *horizontal doing* rather than a *vertical telling*, and how practitioners can help organizations *to thrive in this unpredictable and uncertain market*.⁹² They discuss the building of resources for practitioners, and focus on several things which are connected to this pursuit of agility; firstly:

Progressive organizations tend to be highly decentralized. They act on the belief that employees at the frontline should make most of the decisions.

[forum post by Jackie]

The practical implication of this is that front line employees must be competent and confident decision makers. Thus, in pursuit of agility, progressive organizations need to consider employee agency. Sandi argues that this has distinct advantages:

The chances the best decision is greater than under conventional top-down approaches. The decision maker has the advantage of being closer to the issue and will probably be more conversant with the pros and cons than people in more senior positions.

[forum post by Sandi]

Additionally, she goes on to highlight how *the decision maker usually must live with consequences of the decision*. Interested in the ideas being shared, Deborah joins the tail end of the discussion. She adds:

I find that although the decision maker at first might not fully understanding its implications for the whole organization, that is overcome by embedding a culture of transparency in which anybody can seek advice from anybody within the organization.

⁹² Sandi, Susan, Evan, Sarah, and Jackie post on this thread over the course of a few weeks.

[forum post by Deborah]

This has implications for the organization. Communication might be enhanced, and those who might not normally be connected because their domains are far-removed find themselves drawn closer to the centre of the organization.

Sharing of information reinforces the community. Everyone whose advice is sought feels honoured and needed. Whilst, asking for advice is an act of humility, which is one of the most important characteristics of a human-oriented workplace.

[forum post by Evan]

Agility across a workplace where authority is distributed such that individuals experience the agency of making decisions for themselves requires a shift of power. #AlteritOrg gives its own account of the balance of power, and we see through issues of control that transforming organizations for *Teal* requires two shifts. Laura describes:

... people who traditionally have power (because they were held responsible for success, stability, and safety in the organization) need to give it up, whilst those who traditionally were not expected, or even wanted, to feel powerful must take some up. This can be an uncomfortable experience!

[interview with Laura]

Whilst *agency is a fundamental requirement of agility*, adopting a truly collaborative approach can be a *frustrating and challenging process*.⁹³ Nora raises this with me:

I think we witness this within #AlteritOrg. Some of the founding partners appear very reluctant not to have the last word! On some levels this is understandable; they have much experience and are emotionally invested in this community; but they should not go on defining the purpose of #AlteritOrg ... surely that must be a shared and negotiated process. Only then can the newest and the oldest member really experience that agency that should come with alternative organizations.

[interview with Nora]

In so much as organizing for alterity enhances possibilities, so too does it increase potential. An agile community, with fully distributed authority and agency makes demands

⁹³ Interview with Sandi.

on its members. In our conversation, Chris highlights how members grow in competence and can mobilise many more resources to respond to opportunities or challenges. Being individual in a collective the practices of distributing authority, experimentation, and local decision making facilitate a wider perspective. That communicative loop, between the individual and the collective, might be the point at which investment can be directed. Sarah thinks so:

That relationship, between the individual and the collective, is critical to developing capabilities and capacities. And I mean that in developing capabilities and capacities in individuals and in collectives. Nourish that relationship, I say.

[interview with Sarah]

8.3.3 Trying new things

#AlteritOrg members navigate a strange landscape; one where their premise for alterity is as much in a state of becoming as is the community they *build* and the eco-system they *nourish*.⁹⁴ The practices by which they navigate this strange landscape are thus, to a greater or lesser extent, emergent and themselves in a state of becoming. Trying new things, thus, is indicative of a community where experimentation and adaptation are a way of life.

We don't have a one-size-fits-all response to that. We are constantly trying to improve what we do—either making small adjustments to things we are already doing or introducing larger-scale changes to effect broader systemic changes.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

Over the course of a few days, an asynchronous conversation with Beki explored the deeply embedded sense of plurality which emerges from time spent with #AlteritOrg.

I don't think defining an organization in terms of how it gets things done is ultimately that satisfactory. This is only half of the story. It could have the most amazing practices but put to bad use they could bring about some bad things.

[asynchronous text conversation with Beki]

⁹⁴ "Build" and "nourish" are popular words amongst the core community members.

I tell her I broadly agree with her. The discourse of the means and end/s of organizing comes alive in my mind. I try exploring the distinction she makes between good and bad practices: *so how does this work?* I ask; *how do you establish if and how practices are put to bad use, and how do you judge good/bad practices ... can bad practices be put to good use?*

What I'm saying is that we try hard to make sure the practice 'fits'. That's why our repertoire of practices is so wide, flexible, and broadly conceived.

[asynchronous text conversation with Beki]

I enquire: Is that how the connection with organizing principles is activated?

Yes. I suppose that is an important link to make. But I think it's more important to recognise that we must be prepared to try all things, and we must create a community in which it is possible to try all things. Without being able to experiment we will remain trapped in old practices which no longer serve any purpose.

[asynchronous text conversation with Beki]

Beki's own interests, in enhancing organizing practices amongst self-managed healthcare providers, are evidenced around *#AlteritOrg*. Following a workshop facilitated by Beki the community is buzzing with ideas: I feel a tangible energy, even in this disembodied setting. Conversations and comments spike, showing multiple intersections with other practitioners.

Do you have experience of working with integrated decision-making techniques? I'm looking for advice on how to introduce this to our team . . .

[forum post by June]

Your workshop was great—so vibrant and fresh. Sorry I couldn't stay to the end. Where can I access more details about those case study organizations, and might you check out my new . . . venture? Perhaps you'd have something you'd feel you could contribute?

[forum post by Mike]

On occasions like this, I feel like I am seeing the community at its best. It's premise for alterity becomes blurred, whilst attention is focused on collaborating, building trust, sharing transparently, and pursuing that organizational purpose which seeks to amplify

human dignity within organizations. Whilst we might observe those embedded routines and practices of interaction framed around an online community, we might also see those attempts to resist the formula of question and response, which is replaced with a free and spirited exchange of ideas, information, and unmistakable instances of self-promotion. The insular debates about the community's principled foundations seem to be swept away by a wave of becoming alterity, in which practice seems to trump principle.

8.4 Entries and exits

As I contemplated my 'exit' from the research site, I took a final look at those moments when people joined #AlteritOrg; since my own entry, over 1,000 people had made their entry, moving like I had from #AlteritOrg outsider to insider. The newest member seemed to share in an entry ritual like my own.

[Jane] Hi. I'm Jane. Thanks to Jeff for adding me. It's nice to be here amongst kindred spirits. I've been following the work of Teal for a while so it's great to find a group of knowledgeable people taking this work forwards. I look forward to our conversations :)

[Jeff] Thanks Jane. Can you share something about what you might be able to contribute to our group?

[Jane] Yes. I am a nurse. Last year I had a secondment to work with Buurtzorg—who I am sure everyone here will know about. The aim was to see what kind of ideas could be brought back to my own context (local health care . . .). I'd like to share this journey with others who might be able to learn with me.

[Jeff] cc. Anna, Lucy, Maja

[Lucy] Welcome Jane

[Anna] Great to have you join us

[Chris] Great experiences. I had a great time seconded to a company from my sector—not healthcare though. Let's talk?

[Maja] Hello from me. What a lovely journey you are starting on.

This conversation will be not wholly dissimilar to those had by people joining all sorts of online groups, and not in fact that dissimilar from the kind of conversation that might be had in a new offline workspace. In the course of these chapters detailing the research

findings, it has been necessary to emphasise the prompts and cues that serve as adaptations made by #AlteritOrg members to their specific online empirical reality.

I found myself using Jane's experience as a prompt to evaluate my own time with #AlteritOrg.

Firstly, Jane writes about being *amongst kindred spirits*. I have felt, to a degree, that #AlteritOrg is a place of kinship: where members (including myself) have found some sort of home, and where individual hopes and fears might become welcomed and legitimised as part of a broader collective. Secondly, Jane says she will *look forward to our conversations*. I think she is right to do this: my experience of #AlteritOrg is of a place which comes alive with interaction. The disembodiment of an online site, and our residual familiarity with the situatedness of research, is reliant on those interactions to produce and reproduce #AlteritOrg and to construct a site in which participant-observation is possible. I looked forward to conversations; they were my opportunity to build relationships with other members, to acquire knowledge, and to deepen understanding of members, knowledge, and the complex interrelationships between principles, practices, and participating people. Thirdly, Jane remarks to the effect that she has joined to participate: to find *ideas [relevant to her] own context* and *to share this journey with others*. #AlteritOrg members are socialised to understand themselves as participants, rather than consumers or passive recipients. overall, I find this expectation of participation as representative of the wider alternative organizing movement. Jane, and other new members, like me experience a welcome which is framed in terms of a set of stated expectations and regular calls to connect and communicate.

This welcome, and a sense of onboarding which is produced and reproduced by the founders and many of the regular contributors, helps defines those boundaries between insider and outsider which are unclearly marked online. It is clearly established in the community's practices.

Being welcomed is so important. We thrive on being recognised by other people, being noticed. How else can you feel you are noticed online?

[interview with Lucy]

Coming into the group needs to feel like it is something worth doing. Otherwise, why would people continue connecting? I often invite people to talk . . . it only takes

*one person to spark an idea, but we need many people to bring this idea to life
... the newest member needs to come inside quickly ... together we can build a
community doing great things.*

[interview with Chris]

As I look back over my fieldnotes, I find a series of comments dotted about my diaries which helpfully supplement these ideas about entries and exits, and what “being in” really means to #AlteritOrg. It is possible that for all the time I observe a lack of consensus around a coherent set of organizing principles, I am blinded to the strength with which they agree on a development of practices which broadly strengthen the stated purpose.

We welcome people according to the skills they bring and recognise the things that they make possible. It must be about all of us, trying to achieve something together.

[interview with Jeff, founder member and partner]

Not everyone has that contribution to make immediately. We know that. But we need them to know how serious we are about helping this thing come to life.

[interview with Maja, community forum moderator]

Entry points are vitally important to #AlteritOrg; entries are an opportunity to focus attention on participation and, specifically, on practice. This is coherent with #AlteritOrg’s identification as a community of practice, but sometimes, the detail of principle feels like a distraction to the work it wants to engage in. Members come and go, round the clock, as different time zones allow. But it is their entry points which are (co-)constitutive of being #AlteritOrg—not the exits.

Unlike my entry, at which point I was asked to introduce myself to the community—to let people know who I am, what my interests are, and how I might be able to contribute—my exit point attracted no such fanfare. I dropped a short note to Jeff:

[Me] Hello. Just wanted to drop you a line out of courtesy; I am stepping back from the #AlteritOrg community as my research is entering a new phase. I will continue to drop in from time to time, to keep up with discussions and developments, but my level of interaction needs to drop off. I have learned such a lot from my time here, and I’m looking forward to taking time to make sense of the many new ideas the community has helped me

understand. Thanks for your personal interest in my work and congratulations (if I may) on all you have achieved; I'll stay in touch.

[Jeff] Thank you Richard.

I'm not sure exactly what I expected, but if I could articulate it, it was probably more than three words. It made me think of how many people had stepped back from #AlteritOrg without anybody ever noticing. Unless an individual made a specific commitment to tidy up their digital footprint, then presumably there were many members who, like me, had stepped away but who left a digital impression on the landscape. If that is the case, then for what reason did they step away? Was it because their experience had left the promise of #AlteritOrg unmet, or that the empirical reality they encountered did not meet with their expectations?

9. Findings: possibilities

The preceding chapters have presented a telling of #AlteritOrg which has held fast to a few markers of the community: ideas which help define its premise, condition its members behaviours and actions, and shape new subjectivities through its shared discourses and practices. This chapter draws on these markers and holds up the community's purpose and aims for scrutiny in terms of the promises it makes, the potentialities it might envision, and the permanentisations its members might envince. These three elements constitute, and are constituted by, the notion of "possibility"—which ran through the literature review and has quietly underscored my engagement with #AlteritOrg. #AlteritOrg aligns its own premise for alterity with that of Laloux, and his sweeping historical survey of organizational development, and the types of consciousness that give rise to specific organizational structures. Conjoint with this thesis, #AlteritOrg advances the claim that mainstream organizing is no longer fit for purpose. However, #AlteritOrg does this with the corollary belief that *Teal* is, de facto, the destination for any organization wishing to succeed in these complex times. Claims of being "healthy" and "soulful" appear with such regularity across the community, that even language used signals a clear departure from the mainstream approaches to organizing which favour varying degrees of, and responses to, instrumentality and rationality. The commitment to amplifying human dignity within organizations places the human experience of life and work at the heart of the community's organizing endeavours.

9.1 Organizing with purpose

I chat with Jeff about the statement of purpose which shapes #AlteritOrg's journey to organizing for alterity. I had previously tried to articulate it for myself—and we discussed my attempt and the original.

As a self-managed and self-organized community of practice, #AlteritOrg has no formal managers and leaders. Embracing its wholeness, #AlteritOrg values humanity as well as the rationality that mainstream organizations prize; and, pursuing its (evolutionary) purpose, #AlteritOrg serves a global wave extending far beyond its own goals.

[my attempt at articulating a statement of purpose for #AlteritOrg]

Jeff speaks at length in a pseudo-technical language that I am becoming more familiar with, though at times I still feel the need to interject and ask for clarification about words he is using and the meaning he is attaching to them. Jeff doesn't appear to be impressed:

You know you're looking at this from a very Orange perspective? Maybe you're just looking for something that isn't there . . . There's an important journey that people make on their way to an integrated world view which involves leaving behind many of the ways of thinking that condition their response to the world . . . It's not as technical as you try to make out by a focus on language and meaning, there's a whole wealth of meaning that transcends language which is shared by Teal practitioners and those whose minds are opened to an integral perspective.

[Skype conversation with Jeff, founder member and partner]

In this exchange I sense he feels exasperated when talking to the unconverted. I have noted this occasionally in his tone online: he (and a couple of other prominent members) *hold the space*⁹⁵ of the community, surreptitiously policing discussion which looks like its tone is slipping away from that Integral expression of organizational purpose. He disputes this when I gently probe him; but I don't intend for my questioning to be interpreted as hostile. I try to explain that the reality I want to present to my academic audience needs to convince in terms which are acceptable to both communities; although we chat on for a while longer, I sense he does not welcome this line of questioning and we do not speak in person again for some time. He responds to messages, but I note that his replies are selective in what they answer. (Reviewing previous exchanges, I realise that this has been a consistent pattern throughout our text-based exchanges.)

I speculatively message other members of the community, asking them about how they communicate the purpose of #AlteritOrg to people who are new to this world, and whether they have strategies for translating the different emphases of the language. The question of language doesn't attract any significant attention. Instead, their responses focus on two areas: (1) that of how the sweeping historical survey of organizational development creates an *energy for transformation*,⁹⁶ that recognises *the strong yearning that exists amongst people for a more soulful existence*,⁹⁷ and enables them to *reject their current experiences*

⁹⁵ Interview with Chris, founder member.

⁹⁶ Email exchange with Sally.

⁹⁷ Email exchange with Juan.

of how they have to live and work;⁹⁸ and (2), that the specific practices of self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose help communicate a very tangible alterity, that *breathes purpose*⁹⁹ into people's very existence, and *restores the human connection between people*¹⁰⁰ that has been erased by the dominance of structures and systems which have *lost their benefit to the world*.¹⁰¹

Returning to this question of organizing with purpose and trying to reconcile the #AlteritOrg discourse and practice with extant understanding about organizing, I note on multiple occasions how members use this expression of purpose to motivate a kind of prefigurative practice, which is grounded in the hope of a new set of social relations. The language, to my mind, verges on the obfuscatory, though I have pushed this to the back of my mind to try to access that deeper understanding of the discourse and practice of the community. I am reminded that purpose is commonly understood to bind groups together and to contain individual differences without crushing them; maybe Jeff is correct, and my focus is *on something that isn't there*, and instead I should focus on those temporary fictions that do provide me with alignment with the community's offering.

9.1.1 Parsing problems with purpose

To adopt a focus on those temporary fictions is something I have done consciously and unconsciously throughout the study in order to negotiate some common ground as an active participant-observer member of #AlteritOrg. This has been a constant tension I have tried to negotiate in terms of maintaining a performative engagement with the community, without succumbing to a blunting of my claim to critical sensibilities. I argue elsewhere (Longman, 2019) that purpose provides tools to negotiate the passage from ambiguity to agreement, to create those conditions which allow us to share collectively in the prefigurative acts, and to realise some of its saturated value. So, parsing problems with purpose has been important and has required a sustained effort; and this has realised new knowledge pertaining to the promise of new social relations, the potentialities of how this might transform organizing, and the hope of a permanentisation of this version of organizing alterity.

⁹⁸ Email exchange with Max.

⁹⁹ Email exchange with Sarah.

¹⁰⁰ Email exchange with Max.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Jeff, founder member and partner.

Perhaps it is worth noting that other members have shared in these tensions and have sought to create their own fictions which allow them to negotiate the passage from ambiguity to agreement.

I am cautious. Not everything is as it seems; but I think the message is laudable and I want to be a part of taking organizations forward.

[email exchange with Judith]¹⁰²

The way in which people latch on to the claims Laloux makes about the history of organizational development would [be] hysterical if it wasn't also so bemusing. Do they really believe this stuff? Still. The actual organizing practices represent pretty solid foundations for transforming how we live and work. This is what keeps me engaged with the community.

[Skype conversation following up my interview with Tom]

The pursuit of alterity, through a purpose which speaks a language inspired by a set of theoretical resources, might make solid claim to a radical aesthetic; yet, its actualisation of a set of discourses and practices which enable members to negotiate their own pathway to organizing alterity, this is not an inaccessible radicalism which seems to suit the broad mix of members. In that my previous arguments have identified the limitations of different streams of scholarship and different attentional foci which makes theorising about alternative organizing more problematic, this approach to organizing for alterity on its own terms continues to wrestle with the demands of reality and expectation.

9.2 Amplifying human dignity within organizations

My residual concern is in part assuaged by moving away from the statement of organizational purpose which emphasises the problematic intellectual resources which inspire #AlteritOrg and moving towards simpler articulations of organizational purpose: for example, that common refrain of *amplifying human dignity within in organizations*. It is further set aside by engaging with that focus on organizing practice, and the claims of three core breakthroughs: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose.

¹⁰² Unable to schedule a convenient time for interview Judith and I exchanged emails over the course of several weeks.

Our ambition to humanise organizing revolves around these three breakthroughs. Placing the human at the heart of what we do is the most profound act of rebalancing that we can commit to.

[interview with Seth]

The balance between individual organizational level analysis is afforded attention in this shift towards human dignity. And, for all my misgivings about evolutionary purpose, I recognise some potential value it has in safeguarding against the fragility of the human ego. The alterity of #AlteritOrg brings the relationship between individual, organization, and wider environment into sharper focus. And, for those attracted by the premise of organizing for alterity as a process of renewal, and by those further initiatives and movements aimed at organizational transformation, #AlteritOrg certainly fuels an ecosystem of organizing for alterity, in which promise, potentiality, and permanentisation are growing concerns.

9.2.1 Promise

I contacted Jane, the newest #AlteritOrg member at my time of stepping back from the participant-observation stage of the research. I wanted to get a sense of what sort of promise she felt she was made by the community; to what extent she felt #AlteritOrg delivered on *amplifying human dignity within organizations*. The community had grown considerably in the time that I had been a member, and I wanted to try to access its promise through a newcomer's eyes. She agreed to an email exchange.

My experience of Teal is really practice-based, through my career in community nursing. I think I wanted to get closer to what people know about it and to be inspired by their work. The impact I observed at Buurtzorg was unbelievable. Going back to non-Teal practices has been a shock. I need to learn how to take these ideas forward into my setting . . . Instinctively I feel like #AlteritOrg is a very human place. Some other online groups are not like this in my experience, and it's hard to develop those human connections when you are not physically in the same place.

[email exchange with Jane]

The promise of #AlteritOrg has a clear link to its membership base of theorists and practitioners, with special emphasis on how practitioners share their insights, so that others might *learn how to take these ideas forward*. Jane, and others, describe how this develops a clear human connection, which responds to its identity as a community of

practice: a place of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Chris had spoken to me about planning meetings undertaken by the founding partners, which set out a careful attention to the promise of alterity:

As you know, when we started, we were just a small group. But we had very big hopes and had the sense that if we built our community around facilitating those people and practices transforming organizations the we'd have a really clear offering to the alternative organizing world. There are plenty of groups where you can discuss ideas and theories, but we wanted ours to be about practices. You can't do practices without people.

[interview with Chris, founder member]

He seemed conscious that, particularly in the online environment, there were lots of different groups competing for attention. The specifically *Teal* orientation of #AlteritOrg saw its place as a *contributor rather than a competitor*¹⁰³ in this journey towards alterity; Chris felt that being a contributor suited its ambition of amplifying human dignity rather than competing for it.

I had picked up this talk of the promise of the #AlteritOrg community with Lucy, via an ongoing instant messaging conversation.

[Lucy] I think the strength of this community lies in its practical focus. People are drawn to that because we all need help and support in the work we want to do in the world. The promise we make (if you like) is that #AlteritOrg will be nourishing that link between thinking and doing.

[Me] And what about the promise of the what gets done? At the end of the thinking and doing, what is the promise of the organizations that result?

[Lucy] Kind of similar. The organizations that result take on responsibility for nourishing that link between thinking and doing. It's what makes them better places for humans.

[Me] So do you think you achieve that aim, how do you say, 'amplifying human dignity within organizations'.

[Lucy] You know what. I think we do okay. There's not anything that is more important to Teal.

¹⁰³ Interview with Chris, founder member.

Maja had also touched on this idea of making organizations *better places for humans* in an earlier conversation. She had argued that looser organizational structures allowed individuals to retain that sense of individuality:

This means individuals do the work that matters most to them and is most suited to their skills. They can decide for themselves how to measure and evaluate their work. They can decide to change things when they judge they need changing. They can work in ways that mean they have an experience of work which is relevant and can help others do the same.

[Skype conversation following up my interview with Maja]

The promise of #AlteritOrg resides in building organizations that are *better places for humans*. This is an attractive goal which quite naturally emerges from those discourses that advance claims of mainstream organizing as no longer fit for purpose and furnishes these claims with an organizational life that is characterised by greater individual control over the work which is carried out and the way in which work is carried out. Observing #AlteritOrg at first-hand suggests its promise is at least partially met: #AlteritOrg seems to be human place, somewhere where there is a tangible concern for supporting the transformation of other organizations committed to processes of self-renewal. Jane, Chris, Lucy, and Maja are positive about the extent to which #AlteritOrg meets its promise, and I am keen to explore with them whether they feel similarly about the wider promise that is made of *nourishing* the wider alternative organizing space. Chris describes how he can refine his practice inside #AlteritOrg before taking it into the wider space:

Amongst ourselves we have tried out many innovative practices and techniques. So, some of the value of #AlteritOrg is it being a safe space for experimentation. Because there is a danger of reading about practices and trying to use them without really understanding their practical implications. We've been working to implement integrative decision making—you know, from Holacracy—amongst #AlteritOrg partners. Some have used it before, but I haven't. It has given me a chance to really understand how it works on the inside before talking about implementing it in other settings . . . you should speak to Joe about this—he's got a really strong idea of #AlteritOrg as a 'lab' for trialling these sorts of things.

[Skype conversation following up my interview with Chris, founder member]

At Chris's suggestion, I contact Joe again. We go over some common ground, mostly to do with Spiral Dynamics, before chatting about the 'lab' idea.

Yeah. I think this idea of #AlteritOrg as a living breathing 'lab' for new organizing ideas is so powerful . . . on a practical level we have newcomers all the time . . . often, they have no prior experience and giving them a living breathing organizing experience with new practices is going to be really—wow—compelling and actually useful . . . I think it also gives us the basis to make further claims about how practices actually work and collect some evidence of benefits to the community. In many ways the online thing is already evidence of a kind of organizing 'lab', but I want to go much further with it . . .

[Skype conversation with Joe]

One of the most discernible characteristics of the #AlteritOrg members I speak to is that they have such divergent ideas. More than that, I think, that many have the confidence to articulate these heterodox ideas and, when common ground is found, try to enact and/or embody those ideas that responds to serving their shared purpose. Promise exists not just in what is achieved by the general trajectory of #AlteritOrg, but in the developments that occur in its wake, and by those members who pass through its general sphere of influence. As a community of practice, a safe space, and a social lab, alterity exists in and around #AlteritOrg; its members embody the advance of what they understand as *like-minded networks of alternative organizations*¹⁰⁴ which emphasises the fluidity of #AlteritOrg's human-oriented organizing structures.

9.2.2 Potentiality

The promise of organizations that are *better places for humans* and which *amplify human dignity* is inherently forward-looking. Indeed, across a vast body of data, there is an overwhelming evidence to suggest that #AlteritOrg is expressly focused on what we might become. Indeed, I have observed that rarely do members talk about the past; organizing, for them, is seen as an *ongoing endeavour*, collective projects that members are always *currently working on*. #AlteritOrg's own infrastructure frequently adapts and mutates: to incorporate *new skills and passions*, to respond to *new, emerging collective projects*, and to allow members to *readjust their existing levels of commitment*. Consequently, the progress of its own organizing is punctuated by the entry of new members and the discovery of new interests, by the inclusion of new workflows, and the (re-)allocation of work amongst of existing (or exiting) members. It is to good effect that its purpose is described in language

¹⁰⁴ This idea of being *like-minded* comes from an #AlteritOrg expression of purpose.

which, to me, is open to a plurality of interpretation. Whilst the relative youth of #AlteritOrg may explain to some degree why there is no significant mention of the past—except to reference a move away from it—but activity amongst members seems to unanimously support an organizing endeavour which is always becoming, rather than being.

Sarah, who works as an organizational development consultant, describes how her professional practice is experiencing a significant shift following her adoption of *Teal Organizing* practices.

Up until a few years ago my CV read like anybody else's in my field. University degree, graduate management programme, middle management experience, MBA, management consultancy and so on. But something was missing. I didn't feel the work I was doing was worth doing. It was really weighing me down and, in truth, the pressure I experienced to continually add value to the companies I was working with was adversely affecting my mental health . . . Discovering Teal Organizing was like a revelation. It tapped in to all the negative experiences I was having and showed me a way to making them positive. Instead of a lifetime replicating mainstream models I could see a way to use our combined creativity and to shape organizations we can be proud of because they do something good for the world.

[Skype conversation following up my interview with Sarah]

This future focus, and the implicit rejection of the hierarchical command and control practices (which Laloux (2014: 176) describes as a 'blunt weapon' for getting things done), opens a set of potentialities.

It's remarkable that we have spent so long judging people according to what they can demonstrably do. Why has there been no mainstream focus on what they can potentially do?

[interview with Seth]

Susan, who has a background in human resources (and specifically in candidate selection) describes to me how her change in practice corresponds to a change in how she evaluates candidates in the recruitment process.

HR practices need to change with the new paradigm. Recruitment is still about getting the right candidate, but how we reach a decision about who that new

candidate is is changing . . . [Teal] organizations are looking for candidates to share their purpose—skills and competencies can be trained . . . the hires being made in these organizations are much more imaginative and give the organization so much more scope to grow and develop in new ways.

[interview with Susan]

Susan goes on to explain how candidates wanting to experience something of this workplace alterity also need to embrace this changing paradigm. According to Sandi, *what we are capable of is only limited by our imaginations*; and rather than trying to fill an immediate organizational need, individuals (and individuals joining organizations) can be *much more speculative about how they might 'fit'*. She identifies the importance of such potential:

There is so much potential in this place . . . skills and experiences waiting to be unleashed. If we harness them and then our possibilities can be limitless . . . we must show people what is possible—what they can achieve—what they can achieve when their collective skills and experiences are given time to talk and freedom to play with all possible directions. It's our collective brilliance that enables structures to sense and respond to the right workflows . . . but those structures need to come from the right place—and this needs people to have time and freedom to align their core values.

[interview with Sandi]

Sarah and Sandi (and several other members with organizational development expertise I talk to) describe a feeling of liberation. Paul, who I observe frequently online but with whom I only manage a few short text-based exchanges, writes:

I can't express that sense of freedom I felt when I realised that there were other ways to look at the world. The joy of discovery has been so far from my experience of work, but now it is such an energising force.

[asynchronous text exchange with Paul]

Paul had previously shared details about his transition from corporate life to his present work as a freelancer. His experience is representative of a move towards alterity more generally, than of a specific conversion to *Teal Organizing* practices. But his contributions resonate with other members, who share that enthusiasm for things that are now possible.

- [Paul] At this stage of my career to have realised that I can hope for better to come gives me a new reason to get up each morning!
- [Caroline] Me too Paul. I have recently found a group of people who trust me and support me in my work. They let me be me. I never felt like that before.
- [Paul] Thanks Caroline. I realise so much about the workplace dehumanises you—like the ability to make decisions about the things you actually know about.
- [Caroline] Me too Paul—again! Being responsible for building the right structures, working with the right people, and having the confidence to try new things is something I really value in my life and work today.

The potentiality embedded within much of the discourse and practice I encounter may be as much a rejection of the controlled ways of working of the past, as an embrace of what might be possible in future of individual, organizational, and social relations. Rather than a utopian expression of what might be, these are relations which correspond to principled practices which seek to embody future potentiality in the here and now. #AlteritOrg claims as its purpose the stimulation of collective intelligence and the awakening of consciousness; if we—again— try to move beyond the linguistic ticks of this community, we might recognise the power of stimulation and awakening, in creating organizations that are better places for humans.

9.2.3 Permanentisation?

The promise of alterity which amplifies human dignity, and the embrace of potentiality to shape a collective opportunity, raises questions for me about the ultimate destination of this #AlteritOrg journey. What of the claims that #AlteritOrg will *promote Teal Organizing as the new mainstream of organizing* work and life? For a community avowed in their sense of ‘becoming’, will they ever have ‘become’ and, if so, what next? Will alterity cease to be alterity?

The intellectual resources on which *Teal Organizing* draws suggests that this destination will, eventually, be replaced with a new one—presumably represented by a new colour; but this attracts little attention amongst community members, maybe they regard that *Teal*

destination as a very long way off, or maybe this simply doesn't come into their thinking.

Peter explained how he understood that ultimate ambition of #AlteritOrg:

Thousands and thousands of people around the world are seeking new forms of organizing. That is, self-organizing. Like me, they're tired of the limitations of the mainstream hierarchical arrangements which are not as efficient or effective as would be claimed and are incapable of adapting to a VUCA¹⁰⁵ environment . . . Teal prompts us to dream and fantasise about what organizing should be. Of course, the work is tied up in in Ken Wilber's Integral theory and Don Beck's Spiral Dynamics Integral which is not widely understood. Those who do understand these revolutionary frameworks understand that it is not a simple, one-step transition that is required. It is a full series of complex transformations that will span many years and will literally affect all major areas of life. When this transformation is complete, then yes, we will be operating with a new mainstream.

[interview with Peter]

He offers a timescale which would suggest the #AlteritOrg project has many years to run.

Lucy, however, seems a little more sceptical:

It is a huge shift, something than most of the time I can barely contemplate. But if the option is not trying, and not being a part of those efforts to lead the change, then what is my contribution to the world? If I'm honest with myself, Teal is not a destination that will be reached. Not in my lifetime. Not ever actually. By its own standards it will change and adapt as the world changes and as people change. It's not Integral Theory that will change the world—not at all. It's people. And one way that can happen is through the practices we are trialling. We are making an impact on people's lives with our changes. We want that to continue and to grow.

[interview with Lucy]

Although they differ on some key ground, Peter and Lucy's responses stand out from others as the most considered and thoughtful. A more widely spread response would be much less questioning of *Teal* as the destination. We hear this from different members:

Listen to the world and ask deep in your soul what you can do to respond. The call to *Teal* is powerful.

[forum post by Jeff, founder member and partner]

¹⁰⁵ VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (from Bennis and Nanus, 1985)

When *Teal* is everywhere imagine what it will be like—all those things you never thought were possible might be possible.

[forum post by Caroline]

Jeff and Caroline represent those who take a view of the transition to Teal as inevitable. For them, it is only a matter of time that most organizations become Teal. Some will cling on to older models and paradigms, but Teal will come to represent the new norm. It will, in Caroline's words, become a *permanentisation*—which, after prompting her to explain in more depth, I interpret as a proxy for becoming the mainstream.¹⁰⁶ This is clearly in that Lalouxian spirit of organizational development which positions us on the cusp of a new organizing paradigm. Whilst I can parse some of my problems with purpose, empathise with much of the attraction of the #AlteritOrg promise, and be inspired by many of the potentialities which arise from embracing collective skills and experiences, I feel stumped by the notion of permanentisation. The idea that the efforts of this community are in the pursuit of becoming the mainstream seems to devalue so much that is good about it and forecloses all the excitement that I feel in the promise and potentiality of alterity.

I came to realise that I had taken Jeff's words to heart: I question whether *my focus is on something that isn't there*. I adopted, instead, an approach which sought out those temporary fictions that offered with alignment with the community's offering. I went to a workshop in London run by Joe and Jackie, and for a drink with them afterwards; I held regular video conferences with Lucy in which we developed resources for her clients; I went with Sarah to visit a company she was working with and sat in on her transformation sessions; I bought and read Nora's book; I wrote for the #AlteritOrg magazine and, subsequently, for another organization in the same space. As I became more embedded in #AlteritOrg discourse and practice I recognise there were times when maybe I did find enough fiction to seriously consider a permanent state.

I am, perhaps, a poor evangelist. I found it difficult to explore these ideas with people outside of #AlteritOrg in neutral terms. Two conversations were common: the first, talking enthusiastically about practices which challenge a particular convention of organizing—presumably, on reflection, to elicit some sort of response from the other person, or to test

¹⁰⁶ I realise I do so a little reluctantly because my conception of alterity hopes for much more than becoming the new mainstream.

their reaction; and, the second, talking in dismissive terms, laced with the language of critical organizational studies, to establish some sort of distance between me and the research site. These conversations seem wholly inadequate in their different ways.

The prospect of permanentisation reminds me of my own ontological and epistemological position and encourages me to take up a stance. It prompts that critical response which some argue is jeopardised when engaging with performativity. I swallow hard to forget Jeff's words about me focusing on something that isn't there. Instead, I reconnect with my instinctive critical sensitivities which prompt a cautious response to the intellectual resources of #AlteritOrg, and to problematise the pseudo-technical language, the ethnocentricity of another movement of the global north with obvious global ambitions, and unresolved contradictions of self-organizing.

By and large, in my judgement, #AlteritOrg is a place of good energy. With good grace, its members have welcomed me, answered my questions, and freely shared their considerable expertise and experience. Their contributions have enabled me to map #AlteritOrg in the context of a wider alternative space. This is represented in a set of principles and practices which have heuristic and performative value in advancing the cause of organizing for alterity, without seeking to establish a set of normative conditions. It was, after all, the prospect of a set of permanentized, normative conditions which jolted me most violently back towards a critique of this new knowledge.

For a community of practice established by six volunteers in 2015—drawing on a small amount of seed capital, their collective skills, and the internet—#AlteritOrg may have surpassed all realistic expectations. In my time alongside it, including as a member, passing through phases of frustration and enthusiasm, I have consistently recognised it as a place where ideas about organizing for alterity would be shared openly and freely. Whilst I value its own displays of alterity, it is that relationship with how it tries to articulate its identity which is problematic. It does, nonetheless, encourage me to look beyond those conventional sites of organizing, to challenge habitual responses to researching organizing as simply negotiating being and time, and to get closer to that edge where something about what individuals share and do in the name of the collective still leaves the researcher feeling uncomfortable.

10. Entr'acte

In this second transition period, I mark the move from doing research to evaluating research. I draw on entries from my reflective diaries (Czarniawska, 2007) and the responses I made over the course of a few months to a set of four questions suggested by Spicer, et al (2016): (1) what issue do you want to speak about; (2) how do you wish to speak about this issue; (3) what is the context from which you speak; and, (4) what effect might your critique advance? My responses are reproduced here without further comment.

What issue do you want to speak about?

Definitely the potentiality in alterity.

Awkward relationship with #AlteritOrg members. I pivot between liking and loathing. Some are bright and interesting; others are so wrapped up in the more crazy ideas of the community that I don't really see that they advance thinking about organizing . . . just about their niche interests.

Not sure that I have the data to furnish a discussion about it, but it's so curious that all this #AlteritOrg activity takes place without money changing hands! When I discuss this with colleagues, they are always fascinated that members give so much for zero financial reward.

Control. Claims of none of it; evidence of loads of it.

How do you wish to speak about this issue?

Generously. These are good people (. . . on the whole). I do respect their attempts at organizing differently. I want to recognise their goodness, and . . .

Disinterestedly. It's really fascinating to reflect on the relationship I've built up with this community. I can't say I'm a natural evangelist for it in the wider world, but I've come to be quite respectful of it, defensive of their attempts at difference, and a little bit in awe of how much they have achieved on the basis of good will. The energy provided by the partners is remarkable—I've seen some of the other projects they're involved in and they are busy people.

Critically. I think this is number one. I take aim at critical scholarship. I think this setting makes a really fascinating empirical setting. I must show that off.

What is the context from which you speak?

What does it matter to me what happens to #AlteritOrg? In reality, not a lot. I would be sad to see harm come to them. I think they do some good in a world in which there is not a huge amount of goodness. But this comes at a cost, and whatever claims are made about its horizontal ordering, members submit to a certain way of doing things within which there are some non-negotiables. But remember, I'm not looking for alterity to mean no rules, systems, activities, structures, principles, practices . . . just alterious ones.

As a researcher I do want to extend a degree of care towards #AlteritOrg. My intention is not to bring about its downfall, and I'd like to share my experiences with the group so that their future performances of organizing—and of becoming #AlteritOrg—might be enhanced. I've spoken with the community's partners about this from the outset. They seem interested.

What effect might your critique advance?

Neither setting out to build up nor bring down #AlteritOrg, I would like my critique to have a performative effect; to guide principled-commitments and inform future practice. Realistically, however, the story of the community I tell in this thesis might not have that effect, so I need to think about other outputs which might have more performative effects.

I'd like my critique to encourage more scholarship in this area. Full stop. This includes critical research with potential for performative intervention. Research about alterious sites of organizing online, telling the stories of the social relations they attempt to bring to life, how they do it, and how we might evaluate their success.

[selected extracts from researcher fieldnotes]

11. Discussion: questions, answers, explanations, ideas

The thesis has established how the legacy of the mid-1800s is key to understanding how we conceptualise and theorise organizing today. And, by adopting an approach which focuses on organizing as ‘a heterogeneous and open-ended process’ (Peltonen, et al. 2018: xiv) it has reached beyond mainstream approaches to connect with different ideas which have motivated alternative approaches to organizing. Recognising the extent to which mainstream approaches to organizing are increasingly critiqued for a lack of fitness for purpose (Reedy, et al., 2016) it has situated its empirical work in an alternative setting. This has meant that, rather than focusing exclusively on new organizational forms and their common organizing characteristics, it has awakened (and been awakened by) the possibility of alterity. In its conception of organizing for alterity, it has argued that the alternative world is not formally predetermined but is developed through practice and may be different everywhere. Connecting this with Ernst Bloch’s ontology of Not-Yet-Being and influenced by alternative approaches to organizing that share a prefigurative ethos, it has drawn on new and/or emergent subjectivities of organizing in order to understand those discourses and practices that are constitutive of becoming #AlteritOrg. #AlteritOrg offers a novel setting for critically oriented research; framed by an alterity premised on Laloux’s work and allied to its promise to reach beyond its own community (with the adventurous strategic intent to nourish the growing ecosystem of organizational renewal).

Beyond some introductory remarks—reviewing and responding directly to the research questions which have framed this thesis—this chapter has two broad aims. First, it further analyses the discourses and practices of #AlteritOrg, focusing on how a deepened understanding of #AlteritOrg’s organizational arrangements reveals a set of principles and practices which serve as qualitative markers of organizing for alterity in a way which prefigures a new subjectivity. Second, it revisits the thesis’ conception of alterity and consolidates the important link between organizing for alterity and prefiguration. In developing a deeper understanding of alterity (through contextualising members’ shared understandings of #AlteritOrg and establishing a link between this prototype Teal Organization and alternative organizing more generally) the chapter concludes by glimpsing different possibilities.

11.1 Reviewing and responding

Informed by extant literature, theoretical commitments, and methodological design—which has embraced digital technologies to gain ethnographically-framed access to an online setting—three broad questions have been addressed.

- 1) what is the premise of #AlteritOrg;
- 2) what discourses and practices are constitutive of #AlteritOrg; and,
- 3) what are the future prospects of #AlteritOrg?

11.1.1 The premise(s) of #AlteritOrg

I have shed light on the premise of alterity and demonstrated how it is characterised by a plurality which seeks common ground—and temporary stability—at individual and collective levels. Beyond the portion of the premise of #AlteritOrg that emerges from advancing the work of Laloux (2014) the premise of #AlteritOrg also aligns with facilitating a social and technological infrastructure to support an unrestrained liberty of thinking about, practicing, and reflecting on organizing for alterity.¹⁰⁷ And so, the alterity to which this thesis refers can only really be loosely defined: a vague floating signifier or, as Knauff (2002) prefers, a “murky” reference. The breadth of the alternative space implies an alterity which is evoked rather than defined, and we might observe that attempts to conceptualise alterity in the organizational studies literature reveal little unanimity about its scope, let alone what it denotes. In its simplest terms, alterity might just be understood as the state or quality of being other, or of not being the self. The a priori expectations of how mainstream organizing is theorised and performed, and the language used to describe it, imbues it with a power capable of suppressing alterity. Indeed, most conceptualisations of alterity bring us back to the already known, claiming that alterity cannot be expressed in any other language than that which is already known. Individual identity work is situated within discourses of organization theory (Brown, 2015) as well as anthropology (Corbey and Leerssen, 1991; van Meijl, 2010); so too is identity work at an organizational level widely undertaken (Albert, et al., 2000; Gioia, et al., 2000). Yet, the practice of organizing ‘reveals the constant co-presence of alterity’ (Czarniawska, 2002: 7) in constructing individual and

¹⁰⁷ I would be cautious of claims of “unrestrained liberty” but acknowledge that this an idea which is important to, and consistent across, many members I interviewed. They believe it is possible.

organizational identity. My experiences of this study suggest that the constant co-presence of alterity would benefit from further scholarly attention, especially in the field of critical organizational studies.

In illuminating the premise(s) of #AlteritOrg, this study has observed how alterity is handled—through collective attempts to create “temporary fictions” (Hoggett, 2006), through which members establish a degree of certainty and/or stability. As a result of these temporary fictions, individuals can express their own individualised interpretations of organizing (so long as the individual remains largely consistent with the collective). This accounts for the multiple lines of flight which are described and analysed (especially in Chapter 8). In constructing a dataset which reaches beyond the bounds of #AlteritOrg, co-creating reference points amongst a collective with a shared enthusiasm for traversing mainstream organizational boundaries, the principles and practices which emerge from this study should be viewed in the wider context of alternative organizing. Members of #AlteritOrg—by advancing the renewal of organizations, supporting those engaged in its work, and sharing a new organizing repertoire constituting a new organizing subjectivity—connect within and beyond the immediate #AlteritOrg network. Networks constantly evolve and adapt. Discourses and practices are enriched by members’ networked experiences and, starting from a place of genuinely caring about organizing for alterity, members are able share their expertise with, and learn from, each other (Pyrko, et al., 2017).

11.1.2 Uncovering principles and practices of organizing

I am acutely aware that the notion of principles and practices does not sound especially alternative. In a thesis which has been at pains to emphasise how alterity is not formally predetermined, its recourse at this point to a set of empirically derived principles and practices cannot go unremarked upon. Suffice it to say that it’s intent is to capture something of the unfolding essence of the alterity of #AlteritOrg—not to prescribe alterity and the steps one can take towards it, but to reveal the detail of an organizing reality with which most will be entirely unfamiliar. Identifying principles and practices have been valuable in terms of analysing the discourses and practices which shape its prefigurative ethos. And, the principles and practices have deepened discussion of the underlying premise(s) of the community with an eye to how this might shape its future prospects. The

qualitative markers of alterity derived from the principles and practices of #AlteritOrg will allow other researchers to approach other alternative organizations with a reference point.

A radically oriented aesthetic (which in the case of #AlteritOrg seems to gently bubble below the surface) helps confront any claims of a transcendent truth made by mainstream approaches to organizing. #AlteritOrg envisions a response to organizing which possesses 'the potential to change the long-term frame for political choice toward a more global sense of shared humanity' (Heyman, et al., 2014: 142). This emancipatory spirit is represented in a rebalancing of human agency through core principles which advance organizational purpose, collaborative working practices, freedom and trust, and transparency. The principles of #AlteritOrg suggest an approach to organizing which is characterised by four themes: (1) a move away from organizational profit towards organizational purpose; (2) a rejection of directive working in favour of a commitment to collaboration; (3) a replacing of hierarchical command and control mindsets with a spirit of freedom and trust; (4) and an abandoning of organizational secrecy for widespread transparency.

Grounded in these principles, #AlteritOrg actualises its beliefs in a set of practices which signal a new way of organizing. These are performative expressions of its core principles, which at least in part embody a response 'to compelling instances of immediate human suffering' (Heyman, et al., 2014: 142). #AlteritOrg's attempt to advance social relations through consensus and cohesion is seen in organizational structures, role-based activity, localised decision-making, and mechanisms for experimentation and adaption. Shaped by its core principles, #AlteritOrg advance a set of practices which indicate small, incremental steps of systemic reform. Its four practices are: (1) replacing hierarchical structures with networked structures; (2) ending the allocation of work according to static jobs in favour of allocation according to flexible roles; (3) removing centralised decision-making so that all decisions can be made locally where knowledge and understanding is strongest; and (4) shifting strategies of planning and control towards a culture of continual experimentation and adaption.

Empirical analysis presented in this thesis indicates that principles and practices are experienced to different degrees, by different people, and often in different contexts. And the alterity pursued seems to be taken up in different ways, to different extents, and with

different effects. So, acknowledging the direction of travel away from mainstream organizing and towards alternative organizing can help us glimpse something of the ultimate destination of alterity (even if the Blochian ontology which helps me conceive of alterity suggests this is destination which will never be reached).

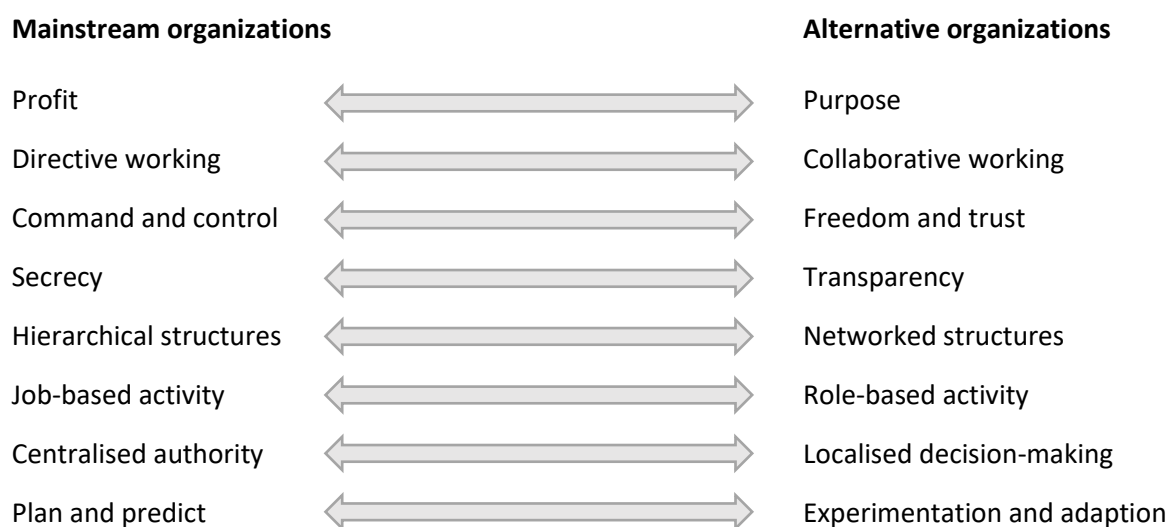
11.1.3 About #AlteritOrg's future prospects

Sustained analysis illuminates what we might usefully capture as the future prospects of #AlteritOrg. This demands we question the extent to which #AlteritOrg delivers on its promises, how it reveals (and, presumably, obscures) a set of potentialities, and with what legitimacy it sets its sights on a longer-term permanentisation. #AlteritOrg promises organizations that are better places for humans to inhabit. It directs its attention to advancing discourses and practices that constitute a social order. These are discourses and practices which demonstrate a clear affinity with alternative approaches to organizing; nourishing individual autonomy, collective solidarity, and shared responsibility. The mainstream attentions of organization theory, which have been 'inextricably rooted in bygone features of economic production' (Walsh, et al., 2006: 661) are passed over in favour of discourses and practices which are able to 'shift the terms in which organizing is imagined' (Fournier, 2006: 295). Its potentiality is revealed, in part, by the extent to which its principles and practices of organizing can be seen to be renewing the rhetoric of institutional logic (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). #AlteritOrg might well be (or become) part of that resource base from which Puranam, et al. (2014) aspire to develop new theories of organizing, or other scholars might choose to extend empirical work. As part of evaluating the extent to which #AlteritOrg delivers on its promises, analysis has also interrogated the extent of its potentiality—how it sets its sights on a longer-term permanentisation. In this regard, empirical analysis demonstrates how members are enlivened by those principles and practices which signal a rebalancing of individual human dignity. Consequently, individual members remain very hopeful for #AlteritOrg's future. There is an enlivened hope, which commits them to make good #AlteritOrg's promise with a view to longer-term consolidation. We might need to take this enlivened hope seriously: the participatory and collaborative practices that were unimaginable at the turn of the nineteenth century were so commonplace at the turn of the twentieth century that only their absence was unimaginable.

11.2 Eight qualitative markers of organizing for alterity

The data structure presented at the end of Chapter 4 can be further refined to reveal eight qualitative markers of organizing for alterity. The qualitative markers are representative of the regularity and patterning of becoming—rather than any singular, normative prescription of being. As markers of organizing for alterity, each offers a different attentional focus to those engaged in conceptual and theoretical work in the field of alternative organizing and, in the specific context of this thesis, of organizing for alterity. In Figure 11.i (below) the markers correspond to principles and practices of organizing for alterity—the upper four markers are derived from principles of organizing for alterity, and the lower four markers are derived from practices of organizing for alterity. The data structure previously presented details how I have constructed concepts and themes, which I subsequently draw on to construct these qualitative markers. Whilst I will later argue that organizing for alterity cannot be adequately captured as an oppositional twin to any characterisation of mainstream organizations, expressing an oppositional alterity on a sliding scale allows for different degrees of alterity, affording different emphases in different settings and contexts.

Fig. 11.i Eight qualitative markers of organizing for alterity



On the left-hand side of Figure 11.i, eight markers articulate common characteristics of mainstream organizations. These markers have been developed in two significant ways. Firstly, they are developed thematically from empirical data (especially from archival sources and interviews which subsequently clarified meanings and understandings). And, secondly, they are developed by going back and forth between the themes emerging from empirical data and the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. Based on original empirical data and theoretical sources, these eight markers articulate the grounds on which I characterise mainstream organizations. This suggests a default position from which we might observe whence alternative discourses and practices depart. On the right-hand side of Figure 11.i, eight markers articulate common characteristics of alternative organizations. Again, these markers have been developed in two significant ways. Firstly, they are driven by themes, concepts, discourses, and practices emerging from the study's original data. Whilst these have been considered in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, interviews and participant-observation has been key to clarifying meanings and understandings. Grounded in original empirical data, informed by theoretical and conceptual sources, these eight markers articulate the grounds on which I construct an organizational alterity. Rather than representing a destination, these markers suggest eight directions of travel which account for the development of alternative discourses and practices.

The common response of literature emerging from a reconsideration of rationalism identifies some distinctive organizing characteristics pertaining to both principles and practices (Lee and Edmondson, 2017). These characteristics are presented as hybridisations of current organizing arrangements (Courpasson and Reed, 2004) rather than being alternative in any more significant sense (Lewin, et al., 1999; Puranam, et al., 2014). In seeking a reduction of hierarchy and other coercive elements of organizing, the foundational work of Burns and Stalker (1961) set in motion a stream of scholarship which examines networked structures of control and authority, horizontal communication patterns, and organizational fluidity and ambiguity (Baker, et al., 2006; Hamel, 2007; Malone, 2004; Romme, 1996; Zenger, 2002). Careful analysis of #AlteritOrg indicates specific patterns of networked organizing which are representative of a general rebalancing of structures of control and authority; so, too, does it hint at the openness of channels of communication between members aided by new communicative technologies. This demands an extension of current knowledge of organizational structures away from the formal requirements of hierarchy and bureaucracy.

#AlteritOrg's work to develop organizing purpose, collaborative working, freedom and trust, and transparency thereby serves to advance a number of core themes for critical researchers. In organizational scholarship, purpose attracts a variety of treatments, but Hoggett (2006: 190) identifies how it is inherently 'saturated with value', arguing that if organizing is to have some prospect of realising its ends, it must have a sense of purpose. In doing this, he invests purpose with a transformative power. #AlteritOrg expresses its purpose as transformative at an individual, organizational, and societal level; yet analysis demonstrates that this is a purpose that is temporary and contested, and requiring ongoing clarification, at an individual and a collective level. The strength of alterity might lie in its acceptance of ambiguity, which enables broad consensus to be reached; a measure of alterity might be to consider how organizing sits on this sliding scale in terms of creating communities of people, embedding purpose as a guide for decision-making, and in becoming integrated within the behaviours and actions of the members. The principles and practices of organizing interrelate—even if to identify principles and practices doesn't seem especially alternative. This is further observed in links between collaborative working and practices of distributed leadership, freedom and trust and practices of rebalancing structural working relationships, and transparency in enabling responsive, localised decision making.

A set of similarly interrelated practices (organizing structures, role-based activities, localised decision-making, experimentation and adaption) hint at similar critical themes. The seminal work by Fayol (1916) which held that organizing concerned building up the necessary structures, resources, and people feels a long way from the empirical reality of #AlteritOrg. Amongst the community, there is an awareness that organizing, as a means of bringing to life organizational structures, must assume responsibility for its ends. Whilst the performative orientation of this work might lack explicit acknowledgement of mainstream organizational structures as fundamentally capitalist, patriarchal, racist, imperialist, and productivist, a softer but not incomparable cause is advanced in its practical attempts to elevate the individual human. In loosening the control of organizing structures and associated discourses, it challenges that prevailing econometric model of human as resource, thereby allowing for greater connection with a more broadly conceived organizing purpose. So too the impact of role-based activities in motivating through identifying individual talents and enthusiasm, localised decision-making in promoting collaborative work, and experimentation and adaption in creating conditions in which members have the freedom to respond to the conditions as they perceive them.

There is a danger that a reading of the two preceding paragraphs understates the extent to which alterity is contested. Alterity, after all, requires that fiction to allow individuals to become collective, and to develop their own version of becoming alterity. If we were to ask members of #AlteritOrg about what matters most to them then, for the overwhelming majority, the emphasis would be on the performative orientation. Indeed, it is entirely the case that those markers of alterity which are most highly contested are those of principles. Many members are happy to overlook such aspects which they find problematic. The orientation of the community is to prefiguration of these new social relations and, thus, to performative acts. Laloux (2014) modelled his alterity out of his own contextual experiences, and his observations in empirical settings. His work has given rise to performative activity which now demands interrogation if we are committed to deepening understanding about organizing for alterity in the context of becoming less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, and more attuned to human and environmental needs.

11.2.2 Confronting the present: emancipation and empowerment

I argue that we can conceptualise the myriad of approaches to organizing for alterity by way of a shared prefigurative ethos. This ethos is constituted by the experimental actualisation of ideals in which individuals organize such that they become collective, with an attentional focus on organizational discourses and practices, and the internal and external environments (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Ultimately, this prefigurative approach reflects the emergence of a collective, hoped-for future (Gordon, 2007). Confronting present subjectivities, by interrogating current organizational discourses and practices, opens up consideration of discourses of emancipation and empowerment—each of these themes serving as powerful lenses through which those characteristics of mainstream and alternative organizations (as represented in the eight qualitative markers I propose) can be critically evaluated.

Analysis of #AlteritOrg, through an emancipatory lens, asks questions about the extent to which organizing for alterity ‘involves an active process (or struggle) for individual and collective self-determination’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992b: 433) and whether the process emphasises how individuals may ‘alter their lives by fostering in them the sort of self-knowledge and understanding of their social conditions which can serve as the basis for such an alteration’ (Fay, 1987: 23). #AlteritOrg is a community of practice which, by definition, is a place wherein active participation is a pre-condition of membership. This was emphasised when I joined the community: I was asked, what are you able to

contribute to the community? I was subsequently encouraged to introduce myself, my interests, and my potential contributions. And made my own contributions by joining discussions, asking questions, meeting people, attending events, and writing articles which drew on my own intellectual position and developed my own arguments. What I cannot say for certain is whether my contributions met the expectations of others; I seemed to maintain a consistent presence, not as active as the leading figures, but certainly more regular than a good number of strictly occasional contributors. In many respects it felt like an active process by which I became more integrated in the community, recognised by name and face, and asked questions when my perspective was of interest. The language of emancipation seems to require that I determine whether this represented a “struggle”. I think it was. Though the expectations we might have around the nature of “struggle” might be quite different. It certainly was a process which identified internal and external conflicts: the struggle to develop a coherent set of internal principles and practices amongst individuals with different perspectives, experiences, and motivations; and the struggle to communicate these principles and practices in the wider space of organizing for alterity which is, at the same time, both contested and resisted. Analysis accommodated a reading of #AlteritOrg that kept a strong commitment to Lalouxian ideas whilst, at the same time, also accommodating other ideas from the wider alternative organizing space. This included adopting a specific methodology (Holacracy—Robertson, 2015) to guide its own response to self-management, and promoting different (and, thus, competing) methodologies and frameworks for alterity. I always felt that this was done un-reflexively. I often questioned others about the tensions that existed between the different approaches, and how the community could on one hand be assembled around one set of beliefs whilst, on the other hand, be ready to embrace other sets of beliefs. I never felt I reconciled this tension in my own mind. Was there evidence of a panoramic, utopian vision, which took its beliefs as a starting point for an active process of individual and collective self-determination redolent with the spirit of emancipation? Or was it more indicative of confused and/or opportunistic response to establishing itself within a contested and resisted space. It was suggested to me that I was just looking for something that wasn’t there and that my inability to see beyond this was a symptom of my unenlightened perspective: I could move beyond this, apparently, but I had to believe harder.

It was this underlying narrative, that caused me to question #AlteritOrg’s truly emancipatory qualities. I wanted to believe in the project: indeed, the time I had invested in membership and the corresponding emotional attachment challenged me to reflect at

length on my construction of this empirical reality, and the dangers of being perceived as being “collaborationist” (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016). It was this process that catapulted me back to the critical literature that initially inspired me. I studied, and wrote on reflexivity, independently of this thesis, and took time to re-examine my relationship with the empirical data and my experience of co-creating it. And, I wondered what this meant for the self-knowledge of other members, and how they were able to develop their understanding of social conditions. I was troubled by aspects of #AlteritOrg and, whilst I missed my daily interactions with its members, re-establishing the distance between subject and object has afforded me a perspective to consider critical themes. Alvesson and Willmott (1992b: 432) describe emancipation as ‘the process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions, those that place socially unnecessary restrictions upon the development and articulation of human consciousness.’ I cannot claim that was my experience of #AlteritOrg. For all its claims of emancipatory intent, my lasting impression is of a site of organizing which does not achieve this in the way that I understand it.

Instead, we might read #AlteritOrg in terms of empowerment rather than emancipation; not as a second-rate critical theme, but as one which emanates from social relations rather than constitutes them. Empowerment, as a primarily relational concept used to describe the perceived power or control that an individual or collective has over another, relies on the assumption that those who have power over another are more likely to achieve their desired outcomes (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Rarely is power a matter for discussion in #AlteritOrg: the inclination is toward a set of practices which reinforce its commitment to consensus and to horizontal doing. Yet, analyses of power in #AlteritOrg would identify how its informal organizing structures obscure relations of power which would be more explicit in formal ones. This emphasises power as a complex and multidimensional concept. In drawing on Lukes’ (1974) work on the dimensions of power, the thesis draws closer to a critical perspective on empowerment. #AlteritOrg decisions are broadly influenced by its members. Whilst there are dominant voices, and overt attempts to shape discourse around its key organizing principles, it exhibits a good degree of pluralism. Dissenting views can be robustly challenged, and its pluralism—like its purpose—is not uncontested. Amongst a community of practice, it is less obvious how to account for non-participation as a marker of consensus and satisfaction; whilst some members are happy to engage in community-shaping discourses, I observe others who simply slip away. Apparent, however, are those moments of non-decision making, which serve to protect the status quo, and which are

observed in those moments where dominant voices adopt a line of questioning which might be deemed to silence the voices of the less initiated. Moreover, in a similar way the power of non-decision is invoked to head off a challenge; the online nature of #AlteritOrg means that there is a broad understanding that decision-making adapts to an asynchronous exchange of ideas. This can be used to various advantages: diffusing, disrupting, and re-directing. It is in these three advantages that dominant voices in #AlteritOrg might be seen to legitimise their ideas and to reinforce the underlying principles of the community. Managing meaning and shaping the challenge others make to that meaning is a clear exercise of power. It ensures that the political intent of #AlteritOrg, expressed in its purpose, and shaped by its principles and practices becomes the political intent of those actively contributing to organizing for alterity. The absence of formal organizing structures strains our attempts to ascertain the legitimacy of this power in its use to organize alterity (Bourdieu, 1982).

Empirical analysis carried out solely based on a critical response to empowerment, or power, risks a negatively framed reading based on contested pluralism, dominant voices, managed discourses, and an informal and relatively untested structure. Instead, it might be more helpful to acknowledge the bottom up, participatory approach it engenders. My experience is of an empowering community which is in the process of becoming alterity; this is not to say that its attempts to remove power are generating the degree of truth it might believe to be possible, but rather new power relations which require new theoretical models to accommodate a technologically-facilitated community. Without the resources of critical theory studies and dialogic studies, it is improbable that a depth of critique could be achieved in future studies of #AlteritOrg; however, without empirical research, committed to becoming participant-observer, and understanding principle and practice through engaging in performance and discourse, this new empirical reality might never be fully known.

It may be that Foucault acts as an intellectual pivot between these critical perspectives—of power and resistance—and, thus, serves as conduit to move between critical theory and post-structuralist work. The differences between these bodies of critically oriented literature are subject to important debate (Alvesson and Deetz, 1996), and though scholars often present them as two separate categories, I move between the two without fanfare as categories ultimately conceptualised as the key intellectual resources of critical scholarship. Foucault casts light on the limitations of resistance, but we might consider how power

transforms individuals 'into subjects who consider their sense of what it is to be worthy and competent human beings' (Knights and Morgan, 1991: 269). To resist power is to resist the construction of identity; whilst I argue that identity and alterity are not direct opposites, nor can they be conceptualised and theorised according to the same theoretical resources, my argument does not extend to separating power from alterity. Instead, drawing on critically oriented resources, a questioning of individual beliefs may 'estrangle the individual from the tradition that has formed his or her subjectivity' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992: 447).

Whilst the critical theory studies tradition alerts us to structures of oppression—which are judged according to one's emancipatory ideas to overcome them—the added dimension of dialogic studies warns against the notion of "false consciousness" and any presumption on the part of the researcher that they know the best interests of their subjects. I have felt quite keenly attached to my part in #AlteritOrg, not simply as a researcher, but as a participant. The experience has drawn me closer to feeling the power relations at play within a community whose own claim would be that it had resisted construction on that basis. Ashcraft (2018: 613) suggests that this is a valuable experience: her claim, that 'scholars exhibit powerful muscles for critiquing, weaker muscles for changing, and atrophied muscles for feeling relations of power at work' and that 'meaningful intervention is outward facing' (Ashcraft, 2018: 620). Her sympathy with critical performativity is laced with the suggestion that, in fact, the heaviest weight of all to lift is critical vulnerability. Amongst critical scholarship wedded to such traditions and theoretical commitments, the decision to make oneself vulnerable as a researcher is at once bound to be regarded as weakness and strength. This is central, however, to critical research. As Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1991: 474) argue:

The academic researcher should not muffle, under the rubric of a "false consciousness" that masks "real" interests, the voices of those who might wish to convey the positive benefits of their current status. Nor should it silence the voices of those who experience dislocation and discontinuity despite a supposedly privileged position.

As a researcher, exposing oneself to "strange lands", and taking "other eyes" to those landscapes to map some sort of coherent interpretation, can be an experience which provokes significant feelings of vulnerability. #AlteritOrg members' expectations of how you might map their landscapes will, no doubt, be different from your own expectations. They will be different too from that of your academic community and those to whom you

wish your work to speak. The study of alterity—through eyes which can never be wholly other and communicated in the language of common (rather than strange) landscapes—requires openness; openness, that is, to negotiate a complex set of expectations and realities, rather than to rely on the disciplinary tropes which have shaped so much of the knowledge you rely on. Van Maanen (1995: 579) points in this direction when he writes:

Marshalling one's tropes to go in unconventional ways may be difficult and perhaps lonely, but it is by no means everywhere and always unwelcome.

11.2.1 Nourishing a new subjectivity; a radical aesthetic?

In so much as prefiguration theorises through action, or through doing (Sturgeon, 1995: 36), it may be understood as a politics of immanence which attempt to bring a hoped-for-future into the here and now (Gautney, 2009). The extent to which prefigurative organizing simultaneously confronts and nourishes organizational arrangements offers the possibility of a new organizing subjectivity in which theory and practice are deeply intertwined. This advances Breines' (1989) description of prefiguration as attendant to possibilities—and relentlessly focused on alternatives. Prefiguration, it could be argued, mitigates against an overly performative engagement with the object(s) of study which risks blunting the critical apparatus (Fleming and Banerjee, 2016). In its handling of extant literature, where bodies of knowledge tend adhere strictly to pre-existing scholarly schema, this thesis has attempted to cut across disciplinary and theoretical boundaries to spark new forms of knowledge. Whilst this raises theoretical tensions that might be forgotten and/or accentuated (presumably for political reasons), a performative engagement with different bodies of knowledge can reveal more of the 'contexts and constraints' of management (Spicer, et al., 2009: 545) and, de facto, of organizing.

McCloughlin (2012) argues that the radicalism described by Adorno presents a fundamental challenge to cultural norms which constitutes—or is constitutive of—a challenge to primordial social order. For a research setting like #AlteritOrg, this has meant engaging with cultural norms which jar with my own; this does not preclude them from being objects of study, nor insist that I subject them exclusively to my own, preferred analytical tools, but to accommodate a plurality of perspectives that does not meet the expectations of the most popular critical narratives. A research design framed by critical performativity has opened a research space which is facilitated in every possible way by communicative technologies.

And, whilst the boundaries of discourse and practice may have become blurred, the new subjectivity revealed by #AlteritOrg members hints at advancing a radical aesthetic. This has challenged me to confront the most fundamental questions about the community of practice I have engaged with. What is it I have really observed, participated in, documented and analysed? When I observe people talking (or, more properly, typing) about organizing is that equivalent to organizing being enacted? To what extent is organizing rooted in discourses, or in practices? That I have had to confront such fundamental questions suggests that #AlteritOrg is advancing a radical aesthetic, at least of sorts. In its radicalism, this is an organizing for alterity which must inevitably—and simultaneously—challenge those theoretical resources I might employ in understanding it more deeply. Sites of alternative organizing have tended to be interrogated to ascertain whether they are radical responses (and, thus, making efforts to mend a fundamentally broken society) or reformist responses (in so doing, identifying social conditions which need greater checks and balances). Based on this, it seems that sites of alternative organizing may be afforded too simple a value judgement by some scholars; for certain, great utopian excitement awaits the “really radical”, and the “merely reformist” descriptor affords the scholar an opportunity to flex their critical muscles. Still, because the complex questions that stem from discourses and practices of organizing for alterity are unlikely to be well-served by simple value judgements. I have repeatedly had cause to reflect on whether the archetypal descriptors of “really radical” or “merely reformist” construct an unhelpful dualism, with intractable implications for theory and practice, which risks reinforcing a catachresian dialectic.¹⁰⁸

The purpose of critically oriented research must be to reveal an alterity; and only in this way can it fully embrace the radical transformation of the dominant social order (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006; Habermas, 1984; Power, et al., 2003). Discussions of a radical aesthetic signal a general attentiveness to the divisive and destructive patterns and structures that shape discourse and performance (Adler, et al., 2007). According to such a description, empirical analysis of #AlteritOrg demonstrates clear radical intent; it pursues the elevation of human dignity specifically through principles of sharing purpose and mutual trust which become realised in networked structures and localised decision-making. In so doing,

¹⁰⁸ According to a Derridean reading of deconstruction (1972) catachresis refers to the incompleteness inherent in all systems of meaning. Spivak (1988: 272) applies this word to ‘master words’ that claim to represent a group. In this case, we should consider that despite of the use of ‘radical’ and ‘reform’ as descriptors, there are no true examples of radicalism or reform. Instead, these are words that are improperly imposed with only an arbitrary connection to their meaning.)

#AlteritOrg might be labelled as radical. The radical has often tended towards reinvigorating an older set of discourses and performances into social relations: for example, anarchism, syndicalism, cooperativism. Building empirical examples of contemporary organizing practice has incorporated foundational texts which connect with different intellectual traditions (Bengtsson, et al., 2007; Czarniawska, 2008b, 2014; Peltonen, et al., 2018). To adapt these as forward-looking discourses and performances requires an intellectual modelling which incorporates changing social conditions which include technological expansions into every aspect of life. This is as relevant for twenty-first century anarchism as it is for capitalism yet discourses and practices of organizing from different intellectual traditions have not yet established an extensive empirical base. #AlteritOrg is taking that technological condition to facilitate its entire operation, building a radical response on reformist ground. Its use of social media to advance discourses and performances of organizing for alterity represents a small, incremental change of this distinctly capitalist phenomenon. So, conceptions of the radical might not be that helpful in deepening understanding of #AlteritOrg as an organizing phenomenon. To pursue such a label unreflexively suggests a distinctly political project, serving a purpose which extends beyond deepening understanding of organizing for alterity. Adler, et al. (2007: 8) confirm '[t]he boundaries of the mainstream are not fixed but the subject of contestation'.

Analysis of #AlteritOrg has drawn on a range of resources to develop an interpretation which draws on contextual data and specific moments to represent the response to alterity that is made by #AlteritOrg. The analysis is offered, thus, as a map, hoping to elicit further maps, rather than interpretations, from the reader. This has required a degree of cartography across intellectual, theoretical, and conceptual landscapes; it relies on language to hold its ideas and arguments in place, none of which it claims are perfect, but in the construction of its own empirical narrative, it hopes to convince of an long and rich exposure to alterity. In advancing arguments about organizing for alterity, this thesis has sought to build a coherent picture of an alternative discourse and reading of that discourse which leans towards an alterity of insight, critique, and transformative re-definition (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006). Indeed, the principal attraction of a critical perspective lays in re-evaluating those mainstream approaches to organizing that might be perceived as distinctly technocratic and directed towards a general manipulation of human potential and the production and reproduction of uneven social relations. Without a contextual awareness of the social construction of organizing, mainstream approaches have fallen short of responding to basic human need. Instead, relying on a view of social relations

which is itself socially constructed and interpreted from a position of relative privilege in comparison to the experiences of many, #AlteritOrg makes a sustained attempt at challenging that dominant narrative that individual needs can be satisfied only in terms of capitalism. This common challenge opens the space in which individuals can become collective and, thus, prefigure an alterity in the here and now.

11.3 A deeper understanding of alterity

The central role that “alterity” has taken in this thesis has required some nimble footwork because establishing alterity remains an ongoing act of differentiation. Czarniawska (2008a: 8) likens alterity and identity to oppositional twins, which permits ‘a relationship of difference’ and emphasises how alterity can only exist in opposition to the identity of the dominant social order. Few scholars have successfully mounted a challenge to the organizing practices of this dominant social order, though, increasingly, such a challenge is finding its voice. Peltonen, et al. (2018: xi) seek to advance this, contributing to the debate of the mainstream historiography of organizing; arguing:

[t]he historiographical interpretation of (modern) organizing—having its origin in the emergence of formal organizations and associated rational techniques of managing—leads to a construction of the field that emphasizes the triumph of theoretical and practical openness towards the complexities and multiplicities inherent in the process of organizing.

Their work is representative of a more recent trend in scholarship to reevaluate the historiography which frames mainstream responses to organizing (Du Gay, 2000; Cummings and Bridgman, 2011; Cummings, et al., 2017) and, in so doing, to re-evaluate its dominance of the social order. It is this dominance of the social order that leads me to further consider that relationship between identity and alterity, emphasising the contested nature of alterity.

This thesis has considered the perceived shortcomings of mainstream responses to organizing which command scholarly attention. For example, Walsh, et al. (2006) note high the dominance of economic production on theories of organizing which Reedy and Learmonth (2009) attribute to a conceptual framing of organizing by competitive individualism. This is compounded by the resilience of managerial hierarchy (Lee and Edmondson, 2017) and a growing need for flexibility and responsiveness (Foss, 2003; Volberda, 1996), knowledge creation and learning (Nonaka and Toyama, 2007), and effectiveness and survival in a dynamic environment (Birkinshaw, et al., 2008). Despite a

series of hybridisations of essentially bureaucratic forms of organizing (Courpasson and Reed, 2004; Lewin, et al., 2002), the residual drivers of organizational design and form remain (Dunford, et al., 2013) alongside persistent critiques framed by critical theory and dialogic studies which agitate for greater insight, critique, and transformative re-definition of organizing (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006). The trends that underpin the thesis' attention to alterity encourage an openness towards complexities and multiplicities and call out the discourses and processes of organizing as warranting critical attention. And, it is in this light, that the empirical research that underpins this thesis addresses alterious discourses and practices of organizing. It has mapped an expression of organizing for alterity emerging from its study of #AlteritOrg which has facilitated analysis of #AlteritOrg's own shortcomings. Organizing for alterity is thus presented in the context of a view of organizing that is aligned with the trajectory of those developments of scientific management and bureaucratic rationality which move towards identifying organizations as complex outcomes of contested processes (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006; Morgan, 1986; Tsoukas, 2003). It is this trajectory which garners the attention of critically oriented scholars who are attracted to those themes which describe the social and environmental impact of society's residual attachments to rationalism.

As an outcome of multiple processes, #AlteritOrg fulfils—at least in part—the four key dimensions of organizations-as-human-constructions (March and Simon, 1993). It can reasonably be identified as a multi-agential system (e.g. over 1,000 members, each able to establish their level of commitment, engagement, and activity within the given parameters of the community's expectation of contributing to its purpose), having system-level goals (e.g. seeking transformative change of discourses and practices of organizing at an individual, group, and societal level), towards which the constituent agent's efforts are directed (e.g. all activity is directed towards advancing discourses and practices of organizing for alterity through embodied values and beliefs). However, in terms of its identifiable boundaries, it stands to disappoint the more mainstream-oriented scholar. #AlteritOrg responds to a setting in which the advancements of scientific management and any corollary attachments to rationalism are less relevant. As an online community of practice its boundaries are neither emphasised by physical buildings nor by formal memberships. Its principles and practices, thus, are compelled to respond to changing environmental conditions and, by implication, to extend its own version of alterity in opposition to the dominant social order. The approach pioneered by Weick (1969), which adopts a focus on organizing—in order to pursue a processual understanding of

organizations as iterations of sensemaking, interaction, and engagement in various institutional contexts—is thus highly relevant to this thesis. Weick’s commitment to “stamping out the nouns” signals a deliberate choice taken by scholars to focus on organizing rather than organization. This is more than a semantic choice, but underlies an emphasis on the temporary, dynamic, and ongoing nature of life (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). ‘Organizing . . . needs to be connected with something that we organize’; and so Bengtsson, et al. (2007: 3) select ‘activities . . . [as] the natural object of organizing’. The focus on activities is not intended to deny the centrality of the perspective taken on the structural arrangements of organizations. Organizations—as symbolic outcomes of organizing—remain significant, but by adopting organizing as that focus we might also interrogate the structural arrangements that those activities evoke.

This thesis maintains that it should not attempt a description or prescription of “being alterity”: indeed “being #AlteritOrg” seems to be entirely a misnomer. Of its multiple members, and from their multiple interpretations of alterity, empirical analysis confirms how #AlteritOrg is many things, to many people, at many times, in many places, and for many reasons. Its plurality of design and form, articulated by endless iterations of broadly conceived principles and practices, is held together by just one thing: a shared resistance to the dominant social order which is borne out in prefigurative practice seeking to enact an alternative future.

11.3.2 Alterity: revisited

I have given clear signal of how, with the assistance of Bloch’s ontology of Not-Yet-Being, I conceive of alterity—a phenomenon which accounts for the possibility of genuinely different manifestations of organizing while not (yet) clearly delineating what such manifestations might be. Bloch’s thinking has not always directly influenced organizational studies. However, his attraction to other “process” philosophers—thinkers who rejected static models of the real in favour of conceptions which stress movement, change, and dynamism—seems well-suited to the task of theorising organizing and organizations. But, perhaps the more esoteric and literary influences on which he draws to represent the complexities of the world have been difficult to transpose into the language of conceptual discourse (Geoghegan, 1996; Daniel and Moylan, 1996). Instead, and by way of conceptualising alterity and identity as oppositional twins (Czarniawska, 2008a), conceptual development has established a now familiar dialectical pairing between traditional, mainstream, predominant, hegemonic institutional arrangements and that which is

conceived as being alternative. This sets mainstream organizational arrangements against an organizing which might be, to some degree, less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, and more attuned to human and environmental needs (Cheney, 2014). This is captured in the eight qualitative markers of organizing for alterity that I present. However, for those who prefer to avoid crude dualisms (such as mainstream/alternative as de facto opposites) greater nuance is available—we can evaluate different degrees of mainstreamness or alterity within each individual marker and, repeat this across eight markers so as to layer our analyses of mainstreamness or alterity, thus responding to and contextualising each organizational setting.

#AlteritOrg eschews formal hierarchies, has scant regard for bureaucracies, and attends to making organizations better places for humans whilst drawing some inspiration from ecological models and discourses: in this way, it represents a distinctive version of alterity. And so #AlteritOrg fulfils many of the initial expectations we might have of alterity; it is shaped by alternative principles, it embraces alternative practices, and it stands apart from society in its articulation and embodiment of its own response to the means and ends of organizing. However, this is not to say that the alterity of #AlteritOrg (even if it were possible to capture it in a single, coherent form) is uniformly adopted. Earlier chapters evidenced how its version of alterity is contested. I deliberately emphasised alterity as temporary and contested: as an assemblage or multiplicity, rather than any ontologically secure construct. This was the outcome of a conscious research decision, to focus attention on unfolding forces rather than static essences and was undertaken in full knowledge that this represented a political act of selection rather than benign interpretation.

#AlteritOrg's premise for alterity—on one hand its collective response to Teal Organizing and on the other hand its nourishing a wider alternative space—allows for individual members to construct their own versions of alterity within the broad commitments of the community. The individual autonomy of its members engenders a collective solidarity by way of a clear and present commitment to shared responsibility. Empirical analysis highlighted how dissent is contained within #AlteritOrg and, despite the obvious tensions this raises between members, it was important to recognise the growing strength of the community as a place to influence (and be influenced by) a wider set of sites of organizing in addition to its own. So, instead, we might conceptualise alterity as a counterpoint to orthodox expectations of mainstream organizations; something that sets an independent

course of becoming (rather than being explicitly oppositional to something that already “exists”), guided by its own contextual forces, and subject to its own internal and external twists and turns. Previous empirical research highlights the conceptual breadth of alterity, indeed Parker, et al. (2014) list in excess of fifty variants of alternative organizing forms, whilst Atzeni presents empirical research spanning diverse settings: from 1970s factory work in Britain (Tuckman, 2012) and ownership models at Tower Colliery (Smith, et al., 2012) to workers’ cooperatives in India (Hammer, 2012) and self-help groups in Nairobi (Ghielmi, 2012). In these examples we see valuable evidence of those organizing qualities described by Cheney (2014): less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, and more attuned to human and environmental needs. Yet none of these empirical sites should claim their version of alterity as representative of the one, true alterity, or of being applicable to all times and places across all contexts, domains, and cultures. Instead, the growth of this body of empirical work of this nature allows us to consider the potentiality of alterity—and the infinite possibility contained therein. Like Swidler (1979) writing about organizing without authority in free schools, communes, and collectives, and Brown (1992) writing about collectivity, anarchism, and feminist practice in *Greystone Women’s Centre*, organizing for alterity may be conceptualised as a counterpoint to mainstream organizational arrangements—but, we should strongly resist tying it to terms that are strictly oppositional.

11.3.2 Alterity: prefigured

In this thesis, I have argued that prefiguration deals with the question of how social change can be enacted (Epstein, 2002; Siltanen, et al., 2014; Van de Sande, 2013). Analysis has further revealed how, and why, a prefigurative ethos is a potent way to conceptualise organizing for alterity. Whilst much attention has been devoted to discussions of social movements (e.g. Juris, 2012; Maeckelbergh, 2011; Reinecke, 2018) this study has directed its critical gaze on a setting which would benefit from more sustained empirical work and subsequent theorising. This research has engaged with how, and on what basis, #AlteritOrg confronts current organizational arrangements; and, it has revealed the scope of the new organizational arrangements it seeks to nourish. Through an alterity prefigured by specific discourses and practices, #AlteritOrg advances theoretical and practical understanding of Teal Organizing.

Prefiguration constitutes the experimental actualisation of a group’s principles and practices, revealing how individuals nourish alternative organizing—with shared

responsibility—such that they become collective. It directs attention to organizational discourses and practices, both internal and external to the group. And, this illuminates how, in confronting current organizational arrangements and nourishing alternative organizational arrangements, an aesthetic radicalism and an adventurous strategy can reflect a hoped-for future. #AlteritOrg confronts those unhealthy mainstream organizational arrangements that are increasingly subject to interrogation and critique. Members share in Laloux's belief that the world is on the cusp of a new organizing paradigm, and that by nourishing three core breakthroughs we may transition to an alterity that is fundamentally more healthy and soulful. Analysis points to a plurality of interpretations present in #AlteritOrg; interpretations of differing nuance and differing emphases, which contest and confirm its collective respond. This plurality is further emphasised by #AlteritOrg's stated support of differently-named and differently-framed initiatives and movements aimed at a similar alterity—initiatives and movements that glimpse similar possibilities.

Rather than dwell on the contradictions and inconsistencies that surface in my encounters with different members, I choose for a moment to reflect on the sense of alterity that is shared. This collective act of sharing requires members to demonstrate an intellectual agility—sometimes to accommodate different beliefs or approaches, sometimes to overlook clear tensions, and other times to tolerate misunderstandings or misrepresentations. This intellectual agility may be a core strength of #AlteritOrg members, in allowing for individual complexities and multiplicities to be contained collectively. Or, it may be a great weakness; signalling nothing short of a theoretical incoherence and rambling. How we, as researchers, deal with those contradictions and inconsistencies becomes a matter for our own politicking. Reed (1985: 117) articulates a long-standing critique of organization theory; that it has 'been unable to maintain sufficient theoretical space for the essential ambiguity of organisational life and the need to construct interpretations of it in dynamic rather than structural terms.' #AlteritOrg desperately needs ambiguity. Indeed, closer attention to other alternative approaches organizing for alterity facilitates a focus on its dynamic, rather than its structural qualities, which has implications for the extent to which it can account for ambiguity, incoherence, and interpretation.

The structural imperatives that emerge from the grand tradition of organization as modernist enterprise might appear to frame organizing as a normative, rational process

and organizations as the resultant, ontologically secure objects of study from which knowledge about organizing may be derived. Much of the history of organization theory has relied on a set of assumptions which are worthy of more nuanced interpretation. It benefited the earlier parts of this thesis to adopt the more orthodox interpretation of Weber's work, which suggests that an ideal type (e.g. of bureaucracy) might be formed from the different elements that characterise a given phenomenon (1947). This has proved a remarkably convenient (and thus resilient) reading for organizational scholars inclined towards generating normative prescriptions of organizing practices that relentlessly pursue such an ideal type (Cummings, et al., 2017). However, we might also consider how Weber also wrote that this was a methodological 'utopia [that] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality' (Shills and Finch, 1949: 90). In fact, Weber was adamant that the ideal type was essentially a fiction, and states that such a type should never seek to claim validity in terms of a reproduction of, or correspondence, with social reality. Its validity can be ascertained only in terms of adequacy, or contextual relevance, which is too conveniently ignored by the proponents of positivism. Wrestling the argument away from the entailments of that tradition requires more than token attempts at objectivism. Such attempts can only be regarded as constitutive of an interpretation of subjective organizing that relies on taken-for-granted assumptions, restricts imagination of what might be possible, resists experimentation and adaption, and reduces the value of individual and collective entrepreneurship.

Alterity is contested, and necessarily so. Empirical analysis has mapped different lines of flight in which #AlteritOrg members contest ideas about how the community is conditioned, how control manifests itself, how work is carried out, and how members negotiate their own relationship with abstract concepts such as agency and agility. Whilst members push against the nature of #AlteritOrg's commitment to self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose, they appear able to be reconciled with its version of organizing for alterity. Although this is, at times, an uncomfortable process, accepting the contested nature of alterity embraces a degree of fiction (Hoggett, 2006) which allows individuals to become collective; in so doing, each can contribute to a version of becoming alterity. In accepting the contested nature of alterity, and in acknowledging how identity and alterity relate to each other in terms that are not strictly oppositional, the process of becoming alterity can be more fully explored. Becoming has been developed conceptually in the context of organizations as "things in the making" (Hernes and Weik, 2007) and

might benefit from further empirical development specifically in terms of “becoming alterity”. #AlteritOrg is one such thing in the making; and members strongly identify with their role in animating a community of practice, recognising that without such a commitment to becoming alterity there would simply be nothing to become. For those scholars attending to mainstream organizational arrangements, the underlying tension between stability and change requires ongoing attention (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). In that regard, becoming is helpful, because it extends that perspective which identifies organization as only ever a temporary outcome of organizing (Weick, 1995) whose activities are held in place through a common language (Thomas, et al. 2011) rather than any sense of truth. #AlteritOrg’s contribution to this debate is significant.

11.4 Organizing for alterity: possibility

#AlteritOrg is a different thing each time I visit: a constantly changing combination of members online, diverse projects, various discussions, individual energies, and shared synergies make for a pluralistic site of organizing which is as full of complexities and multiplicities as any orthodox site of organizing we might care to imagine. I reasonably expect this to be the case for as long as I continue to return. This makes it a place wherein its alterity is synonymous with possibility, and its lively actualisations of principles and practices make it allow members and visitors to glimpse the hoped-for future. As a thing in the making, such that ‘when two (or more) heterogeneous elements (each already multiple) come together and transform each other’ (Clegg, et al., 2005: 159), #AlteritOrg follows its own pathway(s) for becoming. These pathways appear in perpetual mutation even if #AlteritOrg’s more dominant voices try to chart pathways (which represent their reading of alterity). Conceptually, “becoming” offers room for conceptual and theoretical attention to fall specifically on these pathways, as empirically observable processes constitutive of organizing for alterity. The contested nature of alterity, and the inherent plurality of the #AlteritOrg, does not preclude it from regularity and patterning. This does not foreclose possibility, even if it suggests an inclination to a set of processes and outcomes.

To close this chapter, I want to consider the resources we might better employ to articulate and respond to discourses and practices which move us away from mainstream expectations of the organization. #AlteritOrg reaches far beyond some of those responses to organizing that are implicit in scholarship dealing with a post-bureaucratic rationalism.

Whilst #AlteritOrg's principles and practices signal a reduction in hierarchy and other structural coercions, a lessening of rigidity, and a loosening of rationality, its intent seems aimed far beyond those reinterpretations of classical organizational theory that are represented by a greater fluidity of organizing that is intended to meet changing environmental conditions (Brunsson and Olsen, 1998; Czarniawska, 2014; Greenwood and Miller, 2010; Miller, et al., 2009). #AlteritOrg connects with a number of critical themes—those that take aim at a kind of resistance to the dominant social order, and tend toward emancipating and empowering beyond pernicious modern divisions of gender, race, or sexuality. Yet, it is positioned very differently to contemporary realisations of anarchism (e.g. the online collaborative, *Anonymous*), or modern open source communities (e.g. the technology developers, *Linux*). Still, it engages in the struggle for a future where organizing is conceived of horizontally, rather than vertically, and the common good becomes constitutive of a revitalised social order. It draws on ideas which make for small, incremental change which, in combination, prefigure a new and distinctly alternative set of social relations. In its attempts to traverse theoretical boundaries, #AlteritOrg draws on theoretical material that most organizational scholars would find deeply problematic (e.g. Integral Theory, Spiral Dynamics). #AlteritOrg, through its advocacy of Laloux's ideas, develops and advances new conceptual terms (e.g. wholeness) and re-defines existing conceptual terms (e.g. evolutionary purpose) in a way which, conceivably, would meet with Bloch's approval (himself being a great conceptual innovator). All these ideas and influences are brought together in #AlteritOrg's ongoing project, and demand that we acknowledge (and, possibly, are prepared to flex) our own theoretical and practical commitments. Otherwise, the best we can hope for is an understanding of alterity from the outside. Outside-in views of alterity appear increasingly limited in terms of its contribution to our knowledge of organizing for alterity. So, this thesis joins a stream of scholarship which is moving to develop conceptual, theoretical, and empirical resources which allow for approaches that acknowledge a space in-between simply being "for" and being "against".

12. Conclusions: debriefing the journey

In this thesis, I have set out to build knowledge—on an empirical basis—about organizing for alterity. I began the study with three broad questions pertaining to #AlteritOrg. I subsequently developed them into four research objectives to inform the design of the research and to help deliver its aims.

- 1) To critically evaluate the literature relating to alternative organizing/organizations, and other related streams of scholarship.
- 2) To systematically collect, curate, and analyse data—namely, archival, participant observation, interview, and reflective fieldnote data—(co-)created through netnographic study of #AlteritOrg.
- 3) To present a compelling articulation of the principles and practices of “organizing for alterity” as encountered through the discourses and practices of the members of #AlteritOrg.
- 4) To contribute to knowledge—developed through grounded theorising—about the principles and practices of organizing for alterity, its premise, and its future prospects.

In the **Introduction**, the thesis introduced organizing and framed its perceived shortcomings in order to set out the basis for the research questions. It identified how extant literature informs this research and connected this thesis to theoretical questions relevant to undertaking empirical work from a critical perspective. The approach was scoped, the research site was introduced, and the path that the thesis would take was presented. **Chapter 2** set out the theoretical proposition underpinning this thesis and makes the argument for adopting a critically performative stance (Spicer, et al. 2009, 2016); this led on to **Chapter 3** which undertook a review of the literature to locate the study within the wider body of the critical organizational studies tradition. **Chapter 4** attended specifically to the research design and detailed the methodology of the study. The data structure, the construction of which was informed by the work of Dennis Gioia, was presented on page 108. An **Entr’acte** served as a short reflexive transition, marking the move from a period of “thinking about research” to a period of “doing research”. **Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9** were dedicated to presenting research findings. Recognising the uniqueness of the empirical setting, **Chapter 6** presented some background information and detailed the wider socio-political context for the research site. It began with an overview of the

research site and, subsequently, some of the specific characteristics of being on location with #AlteritOrg were discussed, articulating the nature of the community of practice's website, and the social media channels which radiate from it. It set out some of the practicalities of the conduct of this research in an online setting. **Chapter 7** drew attention to the premise for alterity on which #AlteritOrg was founded. This was an important step in (a) understanding and (b) (re)constructing for the reader its empirical reality. Links were established with the organizing principles and practices which began to surface in this community, which were further explored in terms of the radical aesthetic of this organizing subjectivity. **Chapter 8** presented the researcher's experience of #AlteritOrg, by attending to the reality of discourses and practices. It referred to those specific moments where tensions were evident, capturing specific and reproduced behaviours and actions and maps them onto a larger scale detail of organizing for alterity. This chapter took a broad overview of where organizing happened, of organizing as sharing things and as doing things. The chapter closed by reflecting on the process by the research site was entered and exited. **Chapter 9** drew on these markers and held up the community's purpose and aims for scrutiny in terms of the promises it makes. It considered if and how #AlteritOrg were able to amplify human dignity within organizations and reflected on the future prospects of the community. A second **Entr'acte** served as a short reflexive transition, marking the move from a period of "doing research" to a period of "evaluating research". **Chapter 11** subjects empirical material to further interrogation and highlights the findings of the thesis—central to which is the presentation of eight qualitative markers of alterity, which are constructed from the study's original empirical data. It sets out for discussion a set of questions, answers, explanations, and ideas that emerged from the research. The chapter offered a reading of these findings and drew on extant literature to demonstrate how it built new knowledge and deepened current understanding about organizing for alterity.

Chapter 12 now sets out to evaluate #AlteritOrg and Teal Organizing. This allows me to draw some conclusions in respect of the successes and shortcomings of #AlteritOrg as a community of practice which is organizing for alterity; and, it allows me to do this in the context of its adopted approach—Teal Organizing—and to highlight the potential opportunities and weaknesses of the alterity it seeks to constitute. Finally, the chapter summarises my contributions to knowledge and looks to the future research.

12.1 Evaluating #AlteritOrg and Teal Organizing

#AlteritOrg has developed as a prototype Teal Organization, adopting those self-management practices which enable it to express its organizational purpose and to elevate the skills and humanity of its members. At its heart is an alterity in which organizations evolve on their own (so there's no need to control and predict that future), individuals are capable of self-managing (so there's no need for hierarchy or for consensus), and there isn't one person at work and another at home (so, however relevant to our current experiences of organizational arrangements, work-life balance is revealed as a false construct). In its interpretations of Laloux's writing, #AlteritOrg sets itself apart from other attempts to advance alternative organizational forms; it shares, however, that prefigurative ethos which unites seemingly disparate approaches in confronting current organizational arrangements and nourishing alternatives. This critical evaluation of Teal Organizing and #AlteritOrg is, therefore, presented together, reflecting the one back on the other. This is intended to further consolidate "organizing" as that set of discourses and practices (or means) by which a set of outcomes (or ends) are realised; and, crucially, to signal again the indivisible nature of organizing's means and ends. Although this study has not undertaken any formal empirical work beyond #AlteritOrg, this conclusion enriches its critical evaluation of Teal Organizing and #AlteritOrg with reference to other alternative approaches to organizing. In establishing a degree of connection with other alternative approaches to organizing it hopes to firmly embed the theoretical and empirical context of this research within the broader scope of critical organizational studies.

Organizing for alterity embraces the possibility of difference—difference in terms of how we go about organizing, and difference in terms of what the results of this organizing might be. #AlteritOrg is not, therefore, presented as the de facto outcome of Teal Organizing. It is similarly impossible to establish archetypal anarchist organizations, cooperatives, ecological communities, and so on. Whilst underlying values may be closely shared, simple comparison between interpretations and/or performances of different approaches to organizing taking place in different contexts seems invidious. It remains my view that organizing should be conceptualised as 'a heterogeneous and open-ended process . . . [which seeks] . . . regularity and patterning . . . [rather] . . . than a stable order of things' (Peltonen, et al., 2018: xiv). For #AlteritOrg, these processes and patterns take place in an online community of practice; by way of contrast, the processes and patterns described by

Rosiński (2018), whilst framed by Teal Organizing perspective give life to a fundamentally different outcome.

#AlteritOrg's individual members have repeatedly prompted me to reflect on the own discourses and practices of Teal Organizing, and on the broad range of possibilities enlivened by their sense of alterity. These same individual members reveal subjectivities of organizing which all, in some way, concern themselves with how structures, resources, and people are handled. Teal Organizing shares the spiritual language and holistic care of the individual of Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) and the commitment to horizontally conceived structures such as would be expected in social movements (e.g. Bakker, et al., 2017) and collectivist communities (e.g. Vadi, et al., 2002). Yet, whilst we might claim #AlteritOrg (and Teal Organizations, more broadly) share a generalised gesture towards structures, resources, and people—or individuals, collectives, and responsibilities—its principles and practices can result in a range of performances, relative to a specific context or a particular strategic adventure. What #AlteritOrg (and Teal Organizing) shares with other approaches to alterity is that they do not envision organizing as constituting a managerial subjectivity singularly focused on meeting the needs of the organization and delivering its aims. Instead, it is organizing—for alterity—that engages the potentiality of subjectivities (and the infinite possibilities of new subjectivities) to imagine new social institutions and practices, underpinned by new ethics and values.

Considering the calls of Teal Organizing's advocates within #AlteritOrg we should begin with their support of what Laloux (2014: 56–57) labels as his three organizational breakthroughs: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose. It is possible to read Laloux's book and assume that all three breakthroughs appear in each of the featured case studies (Laloux, 2014: 57–59). This is not the case; and perhaps some of the protestations of #AlteritOrg's dominant voices risk overprescribing their version of alterity? Inevitably, Teal Organizing has its advocates and its detractors. Evidence of both groups are found within #AlteritOrg though, for perfectly obvious reasons, its advocates are more in number and find their voices more greatly amplified. Inside and outside of #AlteritOrg, both groups have much to contribute: its advocates offer valuable experiences of Teal Organizing's discourses and practices which are real and relevant, whilst its detractors are left to whisper their equally real and legitimate concerns at the periphery. My sense is that Teal Organizing is not quite the panacea proposed by its strongest advocates. Jeff, Chris, Jon, Anna, and others are unlikely to be persuaded of this; the tightness of their grasp on a

specifically Teal alterity seems so real to them that I am left wondering what it would take to convince them to look anew at the limitations of the approach they advocate (or indeed of the potentialities they overlook). At the same time, perhaps those critiques made by Teal's detractors need not be so fierce. Sarah, who seemed so keen to explore these critiques away from the gaze of #AlteritOrg's founder members for fear of her own exclusion, might have had her scepticism assuaged if a more open discussion of the means and ends of Teal Organizing had been facilitated. This hints at a struggle at the heart of #AlteritOrg which relates to an approach to Teal which verges on the puritanical. To contextualise any conclusions made in this regard, it should be noted how it is impossible to engage with #AlteritOrg in any meaningful way without confronting its strongly contested theoretical underpinnings. Its basis, in Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory, is a source of contention. Whilst the general direction of Teal Organizing gestures strongly towards a non-hierarchical reading of society, and an individual autonomy which is both respected by the collective and respects its collective responsibilities, the theoretical underpinnings of Teal create a misplaced feeling that some are more evolved than others. The levels of consciousness suggested by Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory (which can be mapped onto Laloux' organizational levels) can create feelings of superiority and/or inferiority. These levels conveniently allow for someone at the "highest" stage of consciousness to "understand" a lower level but not the other way around, and anyone objecting to the theory is simply told they are operating from a lower level of consciousness, which is why they don't get it.

I am aware of much greater noise amongst detractors outside of #AlteritOrg which is of significance to the wider debates if not to the conclusions of this thesis. On his weblog, Hassan (2015) outlines his substantive issues with Teal Organizing. He argues Laloux's work demonstrates inherently irreconcilable problems; he claims that there is hardly any basis in science for these ideas, that they are confusing and confused about the contextual nature of human behaviour, and that they show an ethnocentric bias by seeing some Western subcultures as paradigmatic for the future of management. Vermeren (2016) dispatches Laloux's work even more severely—particularly his reliance on Wilber's underlying theories—and seeks to expose what he regards as its pseudo-scientific fallacies. He appends strong criticism of Laloux's uptake of the notion of self-actualization and the needs-hierarchy, and challenges Wilber (a strong critic of neo-Darwinism) on his conceptual appropriation of "evolutionary". It is notable, then, that so much of the fervour surrounding #AlteritOrg has semi-religious connotations—advocates of Teal are readying

themselves for the next step, big jump, great shift, or momentous leap which awaits us. The quasi spiritual dimension of Laloux's work, and #AlteritOrg's response to it, is unavoidable.

If we are to imagine new social institutions and practices, underpinned by new ethics and values, a final observation must be made about the general sense of uneasiness I feel about what replaces the formal hierarchy or, more significantly, how and where control is replaced. I have already described how Teal Organizing's strongest advocates make the case for the purest interpretation and realisation of Laloux's three breakthroughs and the uptake of a new-age mysticism implicit in the theoretical work of Ken Wilber and others. There remains, however, an awkward tension. According to how #AlteritOrg chooses to advocate for Teal Organizing, the culture of an organization should be shaped by the context and the purpose of the organization, not by the personal assumptions, norms, and concerns of the founders and leaders. However, the first condition of an organization to become Teal seems to require just that—the personal assumptions, norms, and concerns of the founders and leaders. On one hand, we might acknowledge Teal as a label that fundamentally bears limited value. But, on the other hand, its (often clumsy) appropriation by those seeking organizational renewal must balance a responsibility to crafting a nuanced interpretation of its key messages, whilst benefiting from its heuristic value in bringing a sense of the possibility of organizing for alterity into common awareness. Corporate Rebels (2017: online), a group of agitators for organizational alterity met with some scepticism by #AlteritOrg's founder members, dined with Laloux one evening. They conclude: 'Laloux views the world through this spiritual lens, and this is clearly reflected in his writing. Unfortunately, some readers tend to overlook this aspect and come to believe that Teal is more of a reality than it actually is.'

In that Pierre Bourdieu's work suggests how the public intellectual might take to activism, engagement, and social change, I want to briefly (and modestly) reflect on my own experiences. I sense that popular conceptions of the activist have connotations, quite literally, of getting one's hands dirty. But, Flood, et al. (2013) describe a brand of scholarly activism with which I feel much greater affinity. For them, scholarly activism is not a second-rate commitment; and, similarly, it builds knowledge to inform social change by participating in those sites of social change. In the context of #AlteritOrg, I have been an active member, engaged in its activities, and committing many of my own resources to the alterity which represents its move to effect social change. We might observe a degree of

scholarly activism in the work of groups such as Corporate Rebels. However, scholarly activism also commits to progressive strategies of teaching and learning, and to positively impacting the academic community. In this way, I take my cues from fellow critical scholars rather more than the noisier and often more razzmatazz approaches of organizations such as Corporate Rebels who, I would hasten to argue, pursue an agenda not solely confined to the production of knowledge. Because of the commitment I make to represent my findings as ‘particular’ rather than ‘privileged’ (Geertz, 1973) I do now feel able to interrupt those socially structured silences which give the dominant discourse around organizing its strength. Embracing a prefigurative ethos, I can confront its assumptions, discourses, and practices, and demonstrate the alternatives I might nourish instead. This is legitimated by scholarly activism, which has enabled me to build knowledge in the context of an institution delivering that knowledge to others; and, which has enabled me to privilege study that is performative—that is, to build knowledge with those whom the knowledge serves (Knudsen, 2017).

I previously described myself as a poor evangelist for #AlteritOrg. On reflection, that might be a useful indicator that my critical faculties might not have been significantly blunted. However, my ability to interrupt those socially structured silences around mainstream organizing does not yet extend to filling those silences with fulsome alternative noises. I might never extend to that. Instead, I have found personal value in posing questions, listening to answers, and observing what others do and say in the pursuit of organizing. In any case, the Blochian ontology of Not-Yet-Being suggests it is impossible to shut down the alternative—even though to define it in anything approaching concrete terms would be similarly impossible. To engage in definitions would allow #AlteritOrg to fully appropriate its claims of being a Teal Organization; this would shut down that development, novelty, and invention which illuminate the radical aesthetic of this organizing subjectivity.

As noted, Corporate Rebels fear that some people believe that Teal is more of a reality than it actually is. To an extent I share their concerns. But I also feel compelled to acknowledge that it precisely because these people make a commitment to Teal Organizing that we are able to move us further towards the Not-Yet. I don’t expect this would be music to the ears of #AlteritOrg’s members who are invested in talk of “permanetisation”—or becoming the new mainstream. They demonstrate many qualities, which I have sought to represent in the earlier chapters, but they are, in many ways, impatient. I can already hear them responding . . . “if not yet, then when?”. I sense they are an inverse of me; anxious to

secure an identity and be understood in those terms. I stand back from that; lured deeper and deeper by alterity, even though I understand I will never come to know it fully.

12.2 Summarising contributions to knowledge

In this thesis, I have built knowledge through interlocking processes of ‘grounded theorising’ (Holton, 2018), drawing on original empirical data, founded on a critical review of relevant literature, pertaining to the principles and practices of organizing for alterity, its premise, and its future prospects. This knowledge relates to a set of wider disciplinary contributions, which I now summarise.

12.1.1 Empirical contribution

A principal contribution of this study lies in the richness of the empirical material and the specificity of the selected organizational setting. This thesis responds to the call by Parker and Parker (2017: 1382) to imagine ‘a library of alternative case studies’ which can ‘pull abstractions into a particular instance of organizing’ presenting articulations of organizing that are inevitably ‘messy and complex . . . for exploration and deliberation’.

As a community of practice, of organizational development theorists and practitioners, #AlteritOrg was a highly original setting in which to develop new knowledge about organizing for alterity. This thesis extends knowledge about communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Pyrko, et al., 2017) by exploring an *online* community of practice, and evaluating the value of the community of practice to those developing organizational theory and practice.

Most of the work that has informed my conception of organizing for alterity has been carried out “offline” in groups, communities, and societies who are not also seeking to adapt to a new set of technologically enabled communicative protocols. #AlteritOrg advances this, and this thesis extends knowledge about online organizing in the context of an important the societal shift towards greater interconnectedness across time and space facilitated by online, communicative technologies.

Extant academic references to *Teal Organizing* are fleeting (e.g. Lee and Edmondson, 2017; Hugentobler, 2017; Hagström and Backström, 2016) yet it attracts increasing attention in the popular press and is being incorporated into executive education programmes by

practitioners seeking organizational renewal. This thesis contributes empirical analysis to the task of developing critical perspectives on *Teal Organizing* so that its scope might be fully assessed and understood.

12.1.2 Conceptual and theoretical contribution

This thesis presents eight qualitative markers of organizing for alterity. These theoretical markers enrich understanding of a specific set of discourses and practices pertaining to the empirically-observed principles and practices #AlteritOrg as a prototype Teal Organization.

In focusing on organizing for alterity, this thesis develops alterity as an organizational heuristic. Alterity is distinct from identity: it argues that alterity and identity are more than “oppositional twins”, playing out “a relationship of difference”. Whilst identity work attracts significant scholarly attention, I argue that any corollary conceptualisation of alterity is worthy of re-evaluation because whilst alterity might only exist in opposition to the dominant social order, it cannot be conceived of in its entirety as simply oppositional. Instead, the thesis argues, that alterity runs an independent, contrapuntal line to identity and, as such, should not be evaluated in the same terms. This contribution opens opportunities for future research to interrogate alterity beyond the “othering” it experiences within the dominant organizational and management traditions.

In adopting critical performativity as a position to frame this research, the thesis connects with lively debate about the nature of critical research (e.g. Spicer, et al., 2009, 2016; Cabantous, et al., 2016). Crucial to the thesis’ contribution to critically performative work is the richness of its empirical data which has been collected as participant-observer and, thus, by a researcher performing organizing for alterity. This reinforces the potential value of critically performative scholarship to explore sites of alternative organizing.

12.1.3 Methodological contribution

This study represents one of the first uses of netnography in a strictly critical organizational studies context, despite the increasing prevalence (and thus importance) of communicative technologies within organizations. Previous use of netnography has developed insight into consumer behaviour, identifying lead users, predicting trends, and driving innovation and product development (Kozinets, 2009, 2015). As such, it might seem an unlikely bedfellow for the critically oriented scholar. It is well-suited, however, to deepening understanding of

infrastructures, networks, groups, and any relevant constituent's online behaviours, and potentially informing us about many elements of their overall lifeworld. Developing the methodology to account for a central online location (website) and the multiple social media channels that emanate from it, allows for a rich participant-observation experience which (co-)creates contextual (archival) data alongside multiple opportunities to interact and become part of the alternative community.

12.2 Looking to the future

In the introduction to this thesis I noted that organizing, for Fayol (1916), was about building up the necessary people, structures, and resources. In subsequent chapters, I explored other classifications, and relied on individual autonomy, collective solidarity, and shared responsibility to shape my review of alternative approaches to organizing. But, if we reconsider Fayol's idea in the context of #AlteritOrg—and think about its principles and practices in terms of organizing people, structures, and resources—then I wonder if the claims we might be able to make about the alterity of #AlteritOrg is less pronounced than we might have hoped.

In most of the organizing that I have experienced during this study, the legacy of the 1800s remains intact—especially in the systemic processes and rationalism of the Higher Education sector. Despite the repeated attention given to a changing world, how we conceptualise and theorise organizing today has not taken up the challenge to ensure that it is fit to steward people, structures, and resources in ways which respond to the and realities we face today. So, whilst contextual emphases on organizing social structures equitably, people equally, and resources responsibly might be found in more enlightened institutions, we should reflect on the completeness and adequacy of this knowledge about organizing for our own experiences. Building on those experiences, and documenting examples of those individuals and collectives who have taken up the challenge to reconsider the discourses and practices which reframe how people, structures, and resources interrelate, seems like an appropriate response. It is this response which suggests to me that the greatest prospects of successfully conceptualising and theorising organizing lie in balancing individuality, collectivity, and responsibility.

#AlteritOrg may seem to be a million miles away from the realm of industrial management—but has it really come that far? This should not, necessarily, articulate a failure of #AlteritOrg—that would be a value judgement heavily grounded in a rationalism

which has reproduced an uneven social order for too long and which does not serve the interests of all humans and their development equally. I would want to avoid that. But, by reconsidering the fundamentals of what organizing means today, we might observe that for all its weird and wonderful language, #AlteritOrg's aims share a simplicity of intent. Therefore, the results emerging from this study invite an application of its eight qualitative markers—not just to other sites of alterity, but to those mainstream sites where an orthodoxy of organizing persists despite the challenges and opportunities of the day.

Epilogue: ‘What must I do to earn it, please?’

In this thesis about organizing for alterity I have mapped out an alterity for all to see. I use the indefinite article pointedly because I am at pains to emphasise how alterity cannot be adequately conceptualised as a predefined, singular state. Alterity is, in Bloch’s words, Not-Yet. And, at the same time, it is many and various—always more than an oppositional twin. My concern is that we risk speaking about “alternative organizing” as if it were a coherent body of theory and practice. The alterity I have mapped out reveals a set of social relations being lived out—in different ways—in the here and now. It is an alterity in which individuals claim to have more influence over what they do and, as a result, appear to enjoy a healthier and more soulful existence amongst a community of people who negotiate for themselves similar outcomes.

I have brought “other eyes” to the “strange lands” of #AlteritOrg. I have encountered an alterity which values an organization’s purpose over its profit. It actualises this by passing the control of the organization into the hands of the many, by envisioning organizational arrangements which can flex and flow according to need, and, by committing to practices which prefigure the amplification of human dignity in organizations. Through a combination of ethnographic exposure, critical commitment, and researcher reflexivity, my eyes have, in a sense, become other. In becoming other, they have witnessed and experienced those principles and practices which animate this community. Yet, the notion of “other eyes” remains problematic. This process of othering requires an acceptance of otherness as non-conformity to and with the norms of society; othering, thus, is an essentially reductive action of labelling a person as someone who belongs to a subordinate social category. This does not serve organizing for alterity well.

I retreat from this study to reflect on the nature of the other. Doing so reaffirms my interest in Bloch’s ontology of Not-Yet-Being because within the Not-Yet is possibility. The Not-Yet is at work in the present but defies all attempts at its othering (being located ontologically and epistemologically as the “other” of the real, but yet being fundamentally situated within the real). Organizing for alterity might also be explored through that Lacanian distinction of the *other* and the *Other*. The *other* not being, strictly speaking, *Other*; instead, perhaps, an oppositional twin, reflected in a notional alterity which is adequately served by evaluation in the same, or similar terms, to the mainstream. But, the

Other, represents that radical aesthetic; an alterity which cannot be imagined in the same terms as the mainstream. This alterity challenges our response in language, and in law, and demands a mapping of these strange lands to engage with the possibility of new subjectivities and realities.

Since this thesis has sought to reach conclusion, rather than resolution, and based on a shared and sustained diagnosis that organizing in its traditional form is no longer fit for purpose, we might choose to conclude by acknowledging the *Other* eyes of the Wolf. In literature, the wolf is habitually used to represent a predatory figure; lycanthropic tropes institute the wolf as a marker of danger and destruction, of greed redolent with neoliberal overtones of societal financialisation. However, it is through the *Other* eyes of the Wolf that a historical call for organizing for alterity is made plain, meaning that we can continue our search for the possibilities of alterity in the multiple realities and subjectivities of the day.

*A Wolf, who was but skin and bone, so watchful had the sheep-dogs grown,
Once met a Mastiff fat and sleek, stern only to the poor and weak.
Sir Wolf would fain, no doubt, have munched this pampered cur, and on him lunched;
But then the meal involved a fight, and he was craven, save at night;
For such a dog could guard his throat as well as any dog of note.
So, the Wolf, humbly flattering him, praised the soft plumpness of each limb.
'You're wrong, you're wrong, my noble sir, to roam in woods indeed you err,'
The dog replies, 'you do indeed; If you but wish, with me you'll feed.
Your comrades are a shabby pack, gaunt, bony, lean in side and back,
Pining for hunger, scurvy, hollow, fighting for every scrap they swallow.
Come, share my lot, and take your ease.' 'What must I do to earn it, please?'
'Do?—why, do nothing! Beggar-men bark at and chase; fawn now and then
At friends; your master always flatter. Do this, and by this little matter
Earn every sort of dainty dish—Fowl-bones or pigeons'—what you wish—
Aye, better things; and with these messes, Fondlings, and ceaseless kind caresses.'
The Wolf, delighted, as he hears is deeply moved—almost to tears;
When all at once he sees a speck, a gall upon the Mastiff's neck.
'What's that?' 'Oh, nothing!' 'Nothing?' 'No!' 'A slight rub from the chain, you know.'
'The chain!' replies the Wolf, aghast; 'You are not free?—they tie you fast?'
'Sometimes. But, law! what matters it?' 'Matters so much, the rarest bit*

*Seems worthless, bought at such a price.' The Wolf, so saying, in a trice,
Ran off, and with the best goodwill, and very likely's running still.*

Jean de la Fontaine (1668) [trans. Thornbury, 1886: 13–14]

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