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IN SEARCH OF A *DÉRIVE*: FOR ALTERNATIVE MEDIA NARRATIVES OF MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Abstract

Many recent publications hold a dark view of contemporary business administration and its context. The current state of capitalism and corporate management is described as *zombie* (Harman, 2009), *ghostly* (Roy, 2014) or, in the most benign appraisal, *sick but not dying* (Tomlinson, 2010). At the same time, business schools, textbooks and popular management books remain wedded to a reductive view of social interactions, drawing inspiration as well as authority from a century of socio-economic triumph as well as from the rigid definitions of management relations as handed down by the founding figures of the discipline. Drawing inspiration from Walter Benjamin's (1969) refiguring of Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur*, we revisit the haunted spaces of popular management books, using the situationist method of *dérive* to invoke the ghosts of foundational thinkers for inspiration and, possibly, exorcism. The aim of this excursion is to propose strategies for communication about some old ideas of management which still can be regarded as vital, even though the contemporary forms may have become morbid (Fleming, 2017).

Key words: media discourse, popular management books, *flâneur*, *dérive*, neoliberalism, corporate culture

Introduction

What if popular management texts could be written and conceived of differently in mass media? If the discourse did not adapt to the well-known format, so much taken for granted? What if the narratives began to experiment with diverse styles and ideas in management writing, just like we increasingly do in music, dress, and personal outlook?

Many paths of thinking would open up, then, we believe. Maybe readers would appreciate management in different ways. Some very good narratives, and some bad ones, too, would get published. A greater diversity of ideas would be presented. So, we would gain something, but would we not also lose? A unison view, a simple voice, a standard way? Maybe it is a loss, but, we uphold in this text, nothing to regret. The current simplification and formulaic discourse does not help to think of a way out of the current predicament (Fleming, 2019). The standard format of the discourse does not safeguard quality or anything at all, really, or save us from mediocrity and shallowness (on the value of writing management as a genre see, for example, Czarniawska, 1999 and Styhre, 2005).

What else would happen? People would, maybe, cherish reading popular management texts. Some readers would get enlightened, some annoyed. Some would, perhaps discover *la jouissance* (Barthes, 1975) of these texts, as was perhaps the case with the classics such as Peter Drucker, Karol Adamiecki or Henri Fayol, or the old, well-thumbed issues of *Harvard Business Review*. And we could, maybe, learn to write and think management from the old masters from beyond the management bubble, the warriors and dreamers of the word, such as Walter Benjamin or Hermann Hesse. We could learn other things than just the style – by following the rhythms and waves in these old texts we could trust them to show where they can take us. We could learn many things, including management, on a different level and from a different point of view.

This article is one such attempt to follow a rhythm and a wave, an undercurrent of the popular management discourse. We should note that it is not our intent to define the concept of popular management writing. The terms plays only a subsidiary role in our argument, and most attempts to capture its essence end up mired in the oscillation between positivist methodology and corporate interests (cf. Mansouri and Rowney, 2014). For us, any precise definition would serve as only a momentary capture of the dynamics of corporate, business school-fuelled rhetoric (see Parker, 2018). That is why, instead of looking for rational answers, we intend to give voice to the different and perhaps what can be seen as aberrant view.

There is a growing realization that the current state of corporate management and managerialist capitalism can be accurately described as *zombie* (Harman, 2009), *ghostly* (Roy, 2014) or, in the most benign appraisal, *sick but not dying* (Tomlinson, 2010). The crisis of 2007 did not end capitalism, but it punctured the

myths of continual growth and stability which were commonly used to justify global adoption of the capitalist system. Meanwhile, the ongoing ecological crisis exposes the lack of solutions not just promoted, but allowed for in the deregulated market society (Klein, 2014).

Yet, regardless of its ghostly status, capitalism structures not only economic relations but also the ideas governing our thinking and, crucially, the teaching programmes at business schools and departments across universities worldwide (Parker, 2008). Thus, while the phrase TINA (there is no alternative) and proclamations of the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992) both sound decidedly outdated, no alternative socioeconomic ideas and, particularly, no alternative management concepts have gained popular traction (Bauman, Bauman, Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2015). Business schools and popular management thought remains wedded to a reductive view of social interactions (Parker, 2018). The popular management discourse relies on an authority of a century of socioeconomic triumph as well as on the rigid definitions of management relations as handed down by the founding figures of the discipline. Even worse, the growing standardization of academic writing, particularly in the ranked journals (Armstrong and Lightfoot, 2010; Parker, 2014) makes it nigh impossible to thoughtfully (and not just critically) engage with the burdens and achievements of management thought. If academic writing once served to inspire popular texts (Hatch, Kostera and Kozminski, 2005), that era is perhaps long gone and even if it were not, the results would not bring much insight or depth.

In this text we try to take a different route. Drawing inspiration from Walter Benjamin's figure of the *flâneur*, we follow the undercurrent of the *dérive*, which Guy Debord (1977) conceptualized as an alternative line of movement and thought. In this mode, we revisit the ghostly spaces of management ideas, invoking ghosts of some once fashionable tales, such as corporate culture, for inspiration and, possibly, finding a different way of seeing. The tradition of such a complex and multilayered reading of texts, consciously incorporating textual strategies, has been celebrated and developed in the humanities by authors such as Umberto Eco (1995), and is utilized and brought forward in the area of organization and management studies by a number of scholars, including, most recently, the noteworthy special issue of the journal *Management Learning* edited by Sarah Gilmore, Nancy Harding, Jenny Helin and Alison Pullen (2019).

The ghostly side of management ideas

The global costs and unsustainability of the current economic regime have become obvious to the point of truism (e.g. Klein, 2014; Piketty, 2013): rising inequality, global instability, and ecological collapse are simultaneously obvious, terrifying, and unavoidable within the logic of the system. However, in a state likened by

Zygmunt Bauman (2012) to an interregnum, no credible successor regime has as yet appeared to recapture the economic and imaginative interests of the global populace. Yet the search for alternative viewpoints and arresting reconceptualizations of organizational life is one of paramount importance: alternative solutions will not be created *ex nihilo*, but using the cultural and discursive tools at our disposal. We need advice, from ideas and utopias (Bauman et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, humanity seems to have run out of faith in utopias located in the future, and has started, instead, to turn towards the past, in hope of finding solace in retrotopias, idealized versions of how things were before (Bauman, 2017). We propose to look beyond nostalgic mirages and, instead, to examine history for radical advice. In other words, we propose to interrogate some of the past narratives in order to make visible strands of thoughts and action usually hidden from view, and to invite the voices of the past to disturb illusions of necessity and taken-for-grantedness. Rather than mirroring ourselves in a shallow account of the past, we wish to endow these ideas with agency: to invoke its ghosts. Following the historical turn in organization theory, we believe that active and reflective remembrance is necessary not just for the formation of collective identity, but also in order to be able to find truly constructive and creative alternatives (Ochinowski, 2017).

The most famous, and still the most radical, ghost in social science writing is arguably the spectre of communism attested to (or perhaps even conjured up) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848/2000), the word spectre appearing four times in the preamble of the manifesto only to disappear from the rest of the text. It prompted Jacques Derrida to speculate on the absent presence of the ghost whose appearance can never be controlled or prevented, as it already "begins by coming back" (Derrida, 1994, p. 11), its coming already prefigured in its absence.

Such logic of reappearance structures our endeavour, but we also take cues from a ghost narrative more celebrated as a literary achievement: Charles Dickens' (2006) *A Christmas Carol*. It is a story in which a visit of three ghosts provide the necessary impulse to turn a miser into "as good a man as the good old City knew" (p. 100), a development that, read anachronistically, carries certain ironic overtones. Our aim is simultaneously less and more ambitious: in this text we only look for tools of change, but ones that could be used to undermine the certainties of the dominant managerial order. For this reason, we need to be careful in selecting appropriate ghosts for the task.

The ghosts we seek out are intimately connected with some dominating regimes of management but in contrast to the regimes' current manifestations, are – past and, just possibly, more benign. They are ghostly and often forgotten (mere absence does not induce haunting), nor because of specific wrong interpretations that we would like to see corrected. Our concern is with the dominance of reductionist readings of the past, in which engagement with texts and thoughts gives way to

formulaic evaluation of findings and theories (with resulting articles clearly delineating their own contributions), and the discipline of management is reduced to the role of a caricatured sidekick to the global economy. Through reductive fixity, past figures become absent presences in the Derridean (1994) sense, but their hauntings lead us to examine wider significance of ghostliness. As in any investigation into the occult, our aim is to bypass the obvious readings and to bring out the traces that might not be the most apparent in their widely appreciated (or even widely contested) legacies.

But, again following earlier investigations into the occult, we must strike a note of caution. One of our earliest sources of academic knowledge about ghosts, Plato's *Phaedo*, has Socrates denouncing unquiet spirits as evil:

> these must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, who are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; and they continue to wander until the desire which haunts them is satisfied (Plato, 2012, p. 59).

Later history of spectres tends to show them in more equivocal light. Indeed, one ghostly fable towering in the history of world literature, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, posits establishment of the trustworthiness of ghost's pronouncements as a major issue for the title character and a pivotal one for the development of the play's plot. Prince Hamlet, whose murdered father (and namesake) appears as a ghost crying for revenge, needs to confirm or deny the veracity of the spirit's claims. Over the course of the play, the ghost ultimately appears as a truthful, if not necessarily unbiased, source.

Clearly, then, we need some guidance for examining the ghosts of management ideas, and to this end we turn towards that most perceptive of figures roughly contemporaneous with the birth of our discipline: the *flâneur* – an observant connoisseur of the city as described by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin (1969).

The method to engage in such an unusual endeavour needs to take out of the usual and into the domain of the different, yet without losing touch with intersubjective reality. This text has ambitions to explore, to scientifically examine and, at the same time, to artistically challenge and provoke imagination. We propose to link two good methods, one used for doing social science by Walter Benjamin and one for artistic events by Guy Debord. We call this method textual *flâneurie* (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2019), by which we mean following the poetic, reverie-like thrust of historical texts, rather than focusing on the rational, argument building level, yet embracing their literal, face value meaning. The main idea is based on attentive yet free wandering, which can happen in texts, as well as in physical space. We will use some classical texts, such as Robert Escarpit's and Hermann Hesse's, to encounter, *flâneurie*-style, some popular management ideas, in order to find the ghostly *dérive*. We present an example of such possible readings and offer some reflections on the broader possible implications.

How to re-read popular management texts?

Personal reading

Following French sociologist, Robert Escarpit (1958), every written text is "susceptible to betrayal", which means that reading the same work by different readers may result in fertile interpretations. This is not, however, about the interpretive anarchism: the main criteria of text betrayal, as Escarpit sees it, is based on the possibility to give the reader a new understanding of himself and the world. The more the text says about our existence, the better potential it has in terms of betrayal. The question is how to discover this potential?

From our perspective, the necessary condition to discover the communicative potential of the text is the emotional approach to reading, which might guarantee valuable betrayal of the text through awakening of the reader and transformation of his/her self. But what does it mean to awake during the reading process and why does it matter for the knowledge development? Interesting answer to this question has been given by Hermann Hesse, the German and Swiss novelist, who developed the philosophy of awakening through his novels (Roberts, 2008). The awakening is for the author of the *Steppenwolf* an act of sudden shock and revelation, leading to the "death and rebirth" of the human (Hesse, 2000). Following Hesse's argumentation the basic condition for awakening is the rejection and loss of what we have already seen as irrefutable. As he explains in his book *Journey to the East*, "*when something precious and irretrievable is lost, we have the feeling of having awakened from a dream.*" (Hesse, 2003: 24; our emphasis). Hesse's understanding of knowledge development might be well described in terms of *deconstruction of education* (Schuback, 2006): we must become someone else after reading the text to be able to reach a new understanding of ourselves and the world.

The whole strategy of personal reading is based on the emotional experience of the text: it might be possible thanks to the critical dialogue with the author. In this strategy of reading the author might have an authority not because it is worth to imitate his point of view, but because he or she provides a valuable space for discussion with his/her ideas. Imitating someone's opinion through non-reflective accepting ideas in the text creates a danger of authoritarianism and has nothing in common with a knowledge development. In the practice of personal reading then, the reader shouldn't want to agree with the author or possess any ready-made key to open the doors of "accurate" interpretation. Reading in the personal way, based on the interpretative openness and critical examination of author's ideas, might reveal the irreducible normative complexity of the text, the ambivalence of values and norms included, but also might reveal ideas which are not acceptable and must be criticized. Personal reading is, therefore, a certain normative obligation that determines whether a researcher will develop knowledge in the discipline in which he or she works.

Apparent reading

Apparent reading can take place within three types of orientation to the text (Witkowski, 2007). First, it appears when the reader takes the position of the rightness of his own beliefs. It is visible when the reader tries to look at the text from a supra-personal perspective, creating the intellectual domination of both the text and the author. This, in turn, implies the possession of knowledge about the One-Real-True meaning of the text, which usually stays in line with canonical interpretations based on the universal validity. In this case potential otherness in the text is treated as an error, and therefore must be purified by the reader, converted and reduced to a form which is relevant to his/her current knowledge. Secondly, apparent reading is connected with a generous gesture of tolerance towards otherness in the text, confirming its right to separate existence. Otherness in this perspective – though (or perhaps because it is) tolerated – remains meaningless for the subject, without generating any impulses affecting the development of knowledge. Thirdly, reading will remain a wasted opportunity for the development of knowledge, when the relationship with the text and the author is based on a conformist attitude. Imitating the author's ideas leads to unreflective authoritarianism which in turn generates a stagnation in the development of knowledge.

To recapitulate, even the greatest text on management will remain sterile if we ask the question "what does the author mean?" or when we try to persuade ourselves that we possess the only-one-real interpretation of the text, or if we non-reflexively agree with an author without discussing his or her ideas. Apparent reading reduces the potential ambivalence inside the text to normality, or – in the words of Milan Kundera (2007) – to a great archive, in which sweet equality condemns the most life-giving ideas for dying in a common grave. In apparent reading, a life-changing awakening that could arise in a meeting between the reader and the work is eliminated by taming the otherness. Unfortunately, collecting information and points of views, as Bachelard has shown it (2002), has nothing to do with the development of knowledge and science, which requires constant, constructive negation of we have already known, through emotional, reflexive and critical discussions with the texts.

Example

Gibson Burrell sarcastically calls theories of management gurus the "Heathrow Organization Theory" (Burrell, 1997) – pointless theories saturated with bare pragmatism and philosophical emptiness. Just as in the case of *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* by Deal and Kennedy (1982) which has been widely criticized because of presenting universal prescriptions for organizational success, based on strong homogenization of organization culture and the power of manipulation (Rigby, 1993; Willmott, 1993). In such a culture, according to

critics, there is no place for a dialog between views, meanings or senses, ultimately resulting in monoculture, orwellization and loosing autonomy by the employees (Kunda, 1992).

But what if we betray the main principles of organizational change authored by Deal and Kennedy, and put them in the different context, following the paths of Benjamin's *flâneur*, and thus making an alternative reading and interpretation? Being scholars deeply concerned on the democratic condition of contemporary university, we perceive these particular guru principles as a potential resistance tools against academic neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a "form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms" (Brown, 2015, p. 17), in which moral values are relegated as "all individuals and institutions are conceived of as market actors whose objectives are to maximize their capital value, and whose values rest on enterprise and investment" (Rhodes, 2017, p. 25). In consequence of neoliberal turn, management education became instrumentalized, serving as a tool for getting a job, or, even stronger, becomes an ideology and a rhetorics for the normalization of the "no alternative" path. We think that the universities, as counter institutions (Giroux, 2010) need to return to its humanistic roots and ideals so as to be able to work for democratization of society. Walter Benjamin's flâneur and Guy Debord's *dérive* tell us that there is *always an alternative*. Let see how Deal and Kennedy's golden rules for successful organizational change can be read in this *alternative* way, freeing some kind ghosts on the way.

Deal and Kennedy's ideas might, then, be helpful in invoking the ghost of the common good from the management discourse, as shows the figure below (see Box 1). A critical reading of management gurus shows how these ideas promote a neoliberalization of organizing and naturalization of no-alternative managerialism (Zawadzki, 2014), but the *dérive* taken by Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, helps to denaturalize the ideology and to put these ideas into a new context and new use, not contrary to the original but devoid of the ideology it serves.

Box 1: Ingredients of Successful Change

Recognize a real threat from outside.
Make transition rituals the pivotal elements of change.
Position a hero in charge of the process.
Provide transition training in new values and behavior patterns.
Bring in outside shamans.
Build tangible symbols of the new directions.
Insist on the importance of security in transition
Source: Deal and Kennedy, 1982, pp. 175-6

Recognize a real threat from outside

Management education is nowadays dominated by the technical imperative locating its main normative assumptions in the area of instrumental rationality. The educational content is over-economised, which locates it in the profile of the paradigm of functionalism and positivism. Communication between teachers and students, as well as contact with symbolic culture are very often apparent and boiled down to the mere memorization of information. Instead of learning about the humanistic aspects of management, students are only taught to calculate profits and losses, and to treat other people in the organization as a resource necessary to achieve their economic goal (Szwabowski, 2014; see also Parker, 2018).

One of the effects of neoliberalization of the contemporary university is that scholars and policy makers reduce management education to the question: "how to do business?" without leaving space for learning the responsibility for social matters. Exclusively linking higher education to the issues of employability or money generates a false conviction that we should assess knowledge in terms of market success or failure. Many exclude critical distance from their reflection about the relationship between the market and knowledge, thus presenting management education as a tool to achieve taken-for-granted aims connected with employability. When based on instrumental rationality, knowledge becomes an object of individual inquiry instead of collective embodied experience. That is, teachers become only performative workers who ought to spread useful information about technical competencies.

And yet, the cultural mission of the university is defined by Henry Giroux (2010) as an obligation to constantly critically reflect on the socio-cultural environment and intervene in the reality in order to initiate changes to it. It is important to create a culture of collegiality, recognition, fairness, trustworthiness, and independence at work (Kostera, 2019) to achieve this goal. Higher education policy makers should put more effort into the development of clear procedures, which protect the academics from neoliberal exploitation and establish strong trade unions to create space for consulting fears and negative experiences.

The textual flâneur finds managerial ideas for dealing with this alarming disparity in the Deal and Kennedy narrative. First and foremost, it is imperative to recognize that the threat is real and that it comes from the outside (business).

Make transition rituals the pivotal elements of change

Likewise, the *flâneur* uses this motto to seek solutions for managerial emancipation of the university. Letting the ghost of the common good free, we now re-read the prescriptions it contains.

We should differentiate critical education as an emancipatory field of uprooting higher education from ethically false, neoliberal values, which narrow the education

to a mechanism of capital reproduction. We should also develop an ethical dimension of learning as crucial for the reflexive practice, which allows us to better understand the accompanying moral dilemmas and engage in socially relevant actions. It is imperative to introduce collaborative learning in management courses along with innovative didactic methods based on art performance, which will allow us to shift from entrepreneurial selves toward responsibility for the Other. It makes good sense to support the humanistic models of university reforms, based on the Humboldtian model of higher education, with a strong focus on the social relevance of teaching and research, which will allow us to develop civic attitudes in the classroom instead of reproducing market-oriented consumerism.

It seems justified to considerably enrich curricula with critical theories, which would allow reflexive distance in relation to the over-economised content based on the technical imperative present in the mainstream management, thus contributing to their delegitimization, denaturalization, and the dispelling of the TINA myth. The use of these theories would therefore allow a specific deviation from the mainstream, shifting the focus to ethical problem such as the issues of inequality, oppression or power. It would be worth filling curricula with the heritage of art. For example literature (but also film or theatre) is a valuable, emancipatory medium, allowing to see the paradoxes of organizational life which are not recognizable in the mainstream management discourse. Learning processes should be grounded in a vision of authority (teacher, author) as someone with whom it is worthwhile to disagree, rather than someone who should be copied.

Position a hero in charge of the process

Who might be the hero taking responsibility for anti-neoliberal change in management education? The students, of course! The ability of a university to educate students to be responsible and informed citizens in the future has been undercut by the market-inspired, neoliberal attempts to commercialize universities and to turn them into suppliers of proprietary knowledge. That's why it is important to create opportunities for students to develop critical consciousness, so that they can come to terms with their own sense of power and train their public voice as individuals and as potential social agents (Collini, 2012). We, academics, should assist students-citizens by enabling them to examine and frame critically relevant questions. Students-citizens should be aware that what they learn in the classroom is part of a much broader and fundamental understanding of what it means to live in a global democracy (Nussbaum, 2010).

Students can become a hero in the university changes when we provide them the opportunity to learn by experience. It requires deliberative communication in which different opinions and values face one another, and where care is taken to acknowledge each individual holding same position – by listening, deliberating, seeking arguments and evaluating others, while at the same time making a common

effort to articulate values and norms which everyone could agree with (Habermas, 1985). Communication in educational processes must be based on the possibility to constructively use the power of argument. Such a possibility is connected with questioning authorities but also with due respect for them and for all other interlocutors as well. The key seems to be to cause the vision of an authority (teacher, author) as someone who is worth discussing with – but not necessarily imitating – to be embedded in the teaching process.

Provide transition training in new values and behavior patterns

When resisting instrumental rationality and neoliberalism in management education, teachers may introduce students to the literature of critical studies to show the possibility to critically engage in the world. We should introduce and analyze concepts like power, neoliberalism, entrepreneurial self, or governmentality in participatory discussions and collective art performances that offer students space for resistance. To reorient the management education, students should receive opportunities to learn for the sake of learning, when knowledge and creativity become the main source of curiosity and passion, without expectations of productivity. We should treat problem-solving not as the goal but as the method of teaching and learning. Finally, we as teachers must develop critical reflection about the assumptions of the knowledge we teach and, then, discuss these assumptions with our colleagues and students. The ability to see through the power of neoliberal performativity that affects our work arms us with the potential to reconstruct the ways of teaching toward more critical pedagogical strategies.

Bring in outside shamans

For the university to be relevant, it needs to be inclusive (Connell, 2019). If management education is to be an essential sphere for educating citizens equipped to understand others (and with a self-consciousness about the limits of such understanding), to exercise their freedoms in concert with larger concerns over social justice, and to ask questions regarding the basic assumptions that maintain human dignity and govern democratic political life, we might bring in radical pedagogues as shamans to university. They have a great potential to take sides, speak out, and engage in the hard work of debunking consumerism's assault on teaching and learning. They would show us how to orient the teaching toward social and cultural change. Teaching and learning constitute a border space that should enable students to confront ethically and politically the connecting tissue of experience and thought, theory and praxis, ideas and public life. Rather than merely confirm what students already know, any viable space of pedagogy must unsettle common sense with the power of sustained theoretical analysis. Radical pedagogues, such as Peter McLaren and Henri Giroux, might help us develop models of critical dialogical

education focused on posing and addressing problems rather than on giving answers already found by recognized authorities (such answers are easily found, and hardly need the apparatus of management education to become available). As Paulo Freire (2001) shows, critical dialogue is a crucial part of the process of becoming more fully human, because it allows participants to develop a deeper awareness of themselves as unfinished beings.

Build tangible symbols of the new directions

We have to go back to the true meaning of education as paideia: to recreate the true desire for knowledge and true interaction with knowledge, which can empower the human. To fulfil this aim let's organize the seminars outside the university: broadcasted widely through social media, with participation of established scholars. It might be a good way to prepare the students to be the cultural elite and not a social cluster of careerists and philistines – and to show that the main task of the management education lays in critical discussions, not job-market preparation. The quality of this task determines the level of democratization of the public sphere.

Insist on the importance of security in transition

Making critical practice a collective effort in the management education is hindered by many obstacles. Firstly, a clear majority of persons having a contact with management identify the discipline with the practice of effective money-making, additionally closing their horizons of thought in the tight disciplinary corset of positivistic paradigm. Therefore, it seems necessary to find a way to constitute a communication space, which would allow a real, transdisciplinary dialogue between representatives of the mainstream management and researchers originating from the humanities, who are interested in the development of the management education. Perhaps this must go hand in hand with taking away the discipline of management from persons who presently claim to be their only advocates and who very often try to negate the achievements of great authorities (such as members of the Frankfurt School), who, according to "management-discipline-only-owners", do not deserve to be considered in the field of management as they are philosophers, sociologists or artists. Secondly, it is worth turning attention to the problem of mass education in management-related courses, which for years have been among the most popular courses of study in the world. Emancipatory education requires a direct contact between the teacher and the students, which must be based on the master-student relationship. The disproportionally small number of teachers in relation to the number of students makes it impossible to enable such a relationship, which makes education an appearance based on the mass acquisition of diplomas. In fact, the teaching staff is very often marked by an intellectual backwardness connected with reproduction of popular management knowledge in a ritualized manner in the

didactic process in the form of multimedia presentations, typically in several universities at the same time. The teaching staff often includes the so-called "shelf-fillers" – researchers writing books which are insignificant in the cultural sense, and the only role of which is that of staying on the shelves, but which give their authors academic promotion and social prestige.

Textual *flâneurie* and the implications for media discourse

Management, both as a discipline and as a practiced activity, is not necessarily a tool for capitalist colonization of reality. It has been, and continues to be understood and practiced in participatory and welcoming ways, and its discourse can be reclaimed (Kostera, 2019). But such reclamation requires subversion and takeover of the dominant logic and its vocabulary, in line with what Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1993) suggests as a strategy for change: „change can take place when someone – or some group – act as if the rules of the future applied today, or *as if the change had already taken place*" (ibid., p. 20). A similar point is made by Richard Rorty (1979), who notes that radical change requires the present appropriation of the rationality of tomorrow, even if it makes little sense within the logic of today. Such an act requires both the awareness of the multiplicity of possible futures and a deliberate choosing from the co-existent "alternative realities" of the things to come. Divination of the future from the state of the present has become a treasured endeavour in fields ranging from politics and policy justification to economics to finance and marketing, but success is thin on the ground. Control of the future remains an illusion, albeit a precious one in times of interregnum (Bauman, 2012). The most we can see are convincing narrative flows, hardly a reliable guide in a global society of complex and convoluted narrative forms.

So, what if the media could write management differently? A question of style and preference, yes. But so much more than that. For us, it starts with asking what if we could read differently? And also a question of listening, of hearing, of directing attention. Of finding unstated rather than proclaimed contributions. And, most of all, a question of the underlying "whys" and "what-fors": Why are we writing management, and can the writing process survive an honest answer? Maybe we really could learn something different. Become something else, get a second chance, a possibility of redemption. Management studies, old enough now to be young again.

We hope that our example shows how textual *flâneurie* can be done in management writing for the popularization in the media. The reading and writing based on the *dérive* means that it takes a different route from the taken for granted and commonly accepted as "normal". It is respectable to the original but also markedly different and unexpected. By that, we propose, it can be enlightening and even emancipating.

What follows are some more general ideas on how to do this. We propose the following strategies for communicating popular management ideas in ways which can make them vital and relevant (rather than just powerful and commanding), even as the very same words have come to carry increasingly morbid meanings (Fleming, 2017). What follows is a list of suggestions rooted in the method of textual *flâneurie* in search of a *dérive*, as demonstrated earlier in this text. They were conceived as ideas for making management writing more relevant to lived experiences of the vast multitude of people in organizations, but we see them as pertaining to all good management writing. The list is not, and should by no means, be regarded as complete, as the *dérive* is never final. Rather, these points should be seen as a preliminary call for alternative readings (and writings) of past ideas and texts which, given the right ghost and spirit, can be redeemed from the neoliberal morbidity. This is one of the important ideas behind the call for historical reflection in organization theory (for recent overview, see e.g. Ochinowski, 2017).

1. Deviate from the relentless focus on the future and the present; invite narratives of the past: recent, ancient, and medium term.
2. Aspire to writerly texts (Barthes, 1975) which invite continued reassessment of the historical management narratives they present. Avoid texts lending themselves to a single apparent reading. Be a textual *flâneur*.
3. Read and write against the established templates. Dare to be surprising and controversial in how you approach the obvious truths and shared beliefs. Showing hidden or unexpected sides of "obvious" characters and events draws attention, sparkles interest.
4. Engrossing texts make for good social science. Try to write well, and do not sacrifice style at the altar of clarity. For your style guide, consider Hermann Hesse (or Borges, or Proust) rather than the desiccated language of ideology, administrative stiffness, and propaganda.
5. Learn from intellectual magpies. Management is, from its origins, transdisciplinary. Popular management texts should use this quality to its full capacity. Writing texts that are more philosophical, artistic, and cultural will not make them less managerial. Do not be afraid of being funny and light. Conversely, do not shirk from being tragic and gripping: human tales of management need to cover the full spectrum of our humanity (and, occasionally, our inhumanity).
6. Make the past come alive again by showing narratives of management from multiple, divergent points of view, foregrounding different perspectives. Problematize stories, put ideas into context, be reflexive.
7. Present different historical organizers, including activists, entrepreneurs, managers, executives, workers; use examples and examples from different eras (in Poland the pre-1989 era is interesting form organizational and managerial point of view, yet sadly forgotten); focus on the periphery – not just the capitals and big cities.

8. Look for local examples, do not fill the pages of your texts with only the Anglo-Saxon male heroes from the centres of power. Re-introduce the women of management history, present people of different ages who may not have found a place in the spotlight until now. Avoid the well-known celebrity figures: their stories have already been set down by eager courtiers and biographers.
9. Make your stories more complex by describing events from the perspectives of different levels of organizational hierarchies, including managers, workers, and administrative or clerical staff.
10. Your texts exist within a sociopolitical context, and distributing them constitutes an intervention. When framing your own reinterpretations or arguments, consider explicitly Bent Flyvbjerg's (2001) four questions for social scientists who wish to remain relevant:
    (1) Where are we going?
    (2) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?
    (3) Is this development desirable?
    (4) What, if anything, should we do about it?

We look forward to reading more enjoyable management texts in the mass media!

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