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Interconnecting the practice turn and communicative approach to organizing: A new challenge for collective action?

Introduction to the Special Issue

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This special issue advances knowledge of collective action—one of the most challenging issues for contemporary businesses and organizations—by bringing together theoretical and empirical contributions at the intersection of the practice turn (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Knorr-Cetina, Schatzki, & Von Savigny, 2005; Nicolini, 2012; Rouleau, 2013; Whittington, 2011) and communicative approaches to organizing (Cooren, 2015; Putnam & Nicotera, 2008).

Scholars from various disciplines (e.g. sociology, management, psychology, communication, economics and ergonomic studies) have long been interested in the ongoing transformation and enactment of collective action at work in relation to wider organizational transformations. Interpretive (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983) or process theories (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), in particular, have proposed seeing collective (or co-oriented) action as relying upon the *heedful interrelating* of actions (Weick & Roberts, 1993) rather than on the establishment of shared organizational knowledge or culture. Accordingly, we can understand collective action as the capacity of a collective to generate a performance by constantly re-enacting the meaning and orientation of their action in a singular experience within a wider cultural and historical experience (Arnaud & Mills, 2012).

Today, more than ever, collective action is a distributed and hybrid performance, a polyphonic dance of human and non-human agency not necessarily performed within a formal organization (Cooren, 2010; Robichaud & Cooren, 2013). Within these developments, while recognizing the possibility of a "community without a unity" (Corlett, 1989; Nicolini, 2012), the question of how the diversity of practices across time and space become interrelated, organized and recognized as a collective is particularly salient. In particular, what is the role of communication in making connections between diverse bundles of practices so that a sense of collectiveness is formed? How can multiple voices become the one voice of an organized entity, thus gaining coherence while remaining different? This is what collective action is about in modern organizing: a phenomenon in between situated communication and practice.

The first section of this introduction explores the hypothesis that collective action is about how people work within a social and organizational setting to construct and mobilize interests and resources, and how people create the conditions under which social change can occur for the greatest benefit of all concerned. The second section shows how the research presented in this special issue extends our knowledge of the achievement, support and transformation of collective action by studying it from the dual perspective of practice theory and an organizational communication approach. The third section proposes avenues for future research.

PART 1: A (NEW?) CHALLENGE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

COLLECTIVE ACTION AT THE HEART OF CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZING

Collective action is such an important matter in theory and in practice that some have called for organizations to reinvent themselves and shift toward a new model (Laloux, 2014). Indeed, organizations are faced with a range of profound changes—the possibilities arising from digital communication technologies, collaborative economies, temporary organizations based on project work, network organizations, the collapse of the hierarchical organization, etc.—and the way forward is anything but clear and secure. The challenge is to change the organizational arrangements (Girin, 1995) within which work is done and thought about without disrupting what already works. This shift is daunting because failures and misdirection can cause great damage and pain, and because making this shift is poorly understood. Should organizations stop the machine, erase the past, invent the future and then restart the machine? Or can organizations find a more sustainable way to make the shift, which would be subtle and profound at the same time, like a soft disruption that is apparently easy to accomplish but also carefully prepared and cultivated.

Maybe a useful image or metaphor to evoke such a subtle way of changing organizing modes is that of an equestrian performing a flying lead change. Here, the rider commands the horse to change the front leg going forward (e.g. changing from a right lead to left lead) without changing the rhythm and speed. A flying lead change is the most difficult and elaborate feat of horsemanship. Horses cannot do it alone, and only excellent equestrians can make them do it on command. The lead change must be fluid, an almost imperceptible force; it is the result of long hours of horse training and riding practice.

The result is most impressive when the horse is galloping in a figure eight because in this case, the lead change works or fails; there is no other option. If it is performed well and with perfect timing, the horse can continue to run at the same speed along the opposite circle. The hybrid creature, constituted by the horse and the rider, has apparently changed nothing in its collective action while having completely changed its balance and direction: it turns the other way in just one move. Communication between the animal and the human is at its best. If the lead change is not perfect, the horse falters and cannot run the other way around the same symmetrical circle. This is metaphorically the challenge facing collective action and the science of management (whose etymology is indeed the Italian *maneggiare*, i.e. the art of horsemanship).

As we will see in the second section, the papers selected for publication in this special issue ensue from extensive field studies that address this challenge more or less directly. The studies portray organizations that are "lost in translation" between old practices and methods of the last century (some of these practices still work pretty well, while others prove to be outdated) and by the widespread rise to prominence of new ways of seeing communication and organization relationships. Fortunately, this challenge is not totally new: an orientation for advancement lies in acknowledging two important research traditions and communities within the organizational field. These two traditions and communities come together for the first time in a special issue: CCO (Ashcraft, Khun, & Cooren, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2008) and practice theory (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Nicolini, 2012; Rouleau, 2013).

What is an organization (Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Van Every, 1993)? What does it mean in practice to create a metaconversation for collective action and identity building (Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004)? What is the role of communication in interrelating bundles of practices (Schatzki, 2017) and creating a collective action or a collective competence (Arnaud, 2011b, 2016; Arnaud & Mills, 2012; Ruuska & Teigland, 2009)? These questions are at the heart of Communication as Constitutive of Organization (CCO) theories and are shared by the practice turn, which studies how organizational phenomena such as organizational learning and knowing, organizational technology, organizational identity and strategy are practical-discursive achievements (Johnson, Balogun, & Beech, 2010; Putnam & Nicotera, 2008; Vaara, Kleymann, & Seristö, 2004).

Indeed, these questions have long inspired dialogue between the interpretative-discursive turn (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983) and the practice turn (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Knorr-Cetina, et al., 2005; Nicolini, 2012; Whittington, 2011). What avenues does this dialogue open and which ones can help us address the future of organizing? Why are communication practices so important for making organizations perform their lead change on *command*?

COLLECTIVE ACTION AT THE CROSSROADS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

The practice perspective has developed to supplement traditional approaches to business functioning in management sciences that were viewed as being static, fairly reductive, and overly grounded in formal analysis (Geiger, 2009). The objective of the practice turn is to reposition work, processes and activities at the center of organizational analysis ("Bringing work back in" Barley & Kunda, 2001), while focusing on practice as a way to understand "organization as it happens" (Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks & Yanowet, 2009: 1310). Even if this theoretical and methodological field is far from unified (Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni, 2010; Miettinen, et al., 2009), the practice turn (T. R. Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001) focuses on the study of the everyday activities of organizational actors, highlighting their sociomaterial situatedness, their ongoing evolvement, and their performative quality (Hui et. al., 2017).

Regarding organizational knowing, for example, Corradi, et al., (2010: 267) suggest that "practice allows researchers to investigate empirically how contextual elements shape knowledge and how competence is built around a contingent logic of action." They thus propose shifting from an individual and cognitive vision of learning and knowing to a situated and social (and consequently collective) view (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Miettinen, et al., 2009; Wenger, 1998). Knowing is thus "both sustained in practice and manifests itself through practice" in that it is a practical accomplishment rooted in an "extended pattern of interconnected activities" (Nicolini, 2012: 602). The positioning is clear: proponents of practice advocate a socially situated analysis of activity and an emerging perspective of the organization "enacted" by the interdependent practices of actors.

The *strategy-as-practice perspective* (SAP) is one of the most clearly recognized streams that has issued from the practice turn. Its development into a specific field of research is explained by some researchers' dissatisfaction with traditional research in strategy (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2006). Following the works of Whittington (1996, 2006), SAP proponents define the perimeter of their research at the interface of "practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished)" (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009: 73).

Together, the practice turn and SAP provide interesting insights into how practice, on the one hand, and communication, discourse and text, on the other, have to work (and be theorized) together. Within the context of strategy as practice, Jarzabkowski (2005: 9-10) specifies three types of practices: 1. administrative, rational practices that allow strategy coordination (e.g. planning mechanisms, performance indicators); 2. discursive practices that allow interaction concerning strategy and development of everyday strategy discourses (e.g. conversations and tools that convey a managerial philosophy); and 3. episodic practices that create opportunities for strategy to be talked about (e.g. meetings, workshops). All three practices shape and mediate the practice of strategy.

This view somewhat resembles the more profound consideration of Schatzki (2017: 129), who states that practices are "*organised sets* of doings and sayings". In other words, practices consist of both discursive and non-discursive actions. He insists that it is fundamental to keep the discursive/non-discursive distinction in place in order to faithfully account for the importance of language. In particular, he suggests that sayings and texts constantly pervade practices and it is through specific "language types" and "discourse orders" that practice becomes organized (even if only tentatively). Further, sayings and texts "suffuse" bundles of practices with "articulated significance" and thus play a particular role in how bundles of practices become interconnected in collective endeavors (Schatzki, 2017: 140).

In parallel with the practice turn, organizational sciences have also developed a linguistic (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1998), discursive (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000b) and communicational (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011) perspective. Since the recognition, a dozen years ago, of the weak importance placed on speech actions in management research (Woodilla, 1998), the situation has evolved. Speech at work (Drew & Heritage, 1992) has engendered abundant literature within a large variety of disciplines (sociolinguistic, psychosociology of human relations, machine-human interaction, ethnography of language, etc.). The wide array of methodologies and situations examined range from conversational analysis of a single meeting (Gephart, 1978) to the examination of the discursive competency of middle managers (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011), and an analysis of the discourse within a set of recorded interactions (Boje, 1991). This evolution has led to the gradual recognition of the constituent function of speech action ("the business of talk" Boden, 1994) along with the organizing/constitutive dimension of communication in all its forms (Cooren, et al., 2011).

In a synthesis of these studies, Fauré and Arnaud (2014) identify two perspectives. The first, of French origin, is grounded in the study of the transformation of work and organizations. It construes speech activity as a (new) work tool (Detchessahar, 2003; Girin, 1990; Zarifian, 1996). The second, more international, perspective stems from the linguistic shift (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000a) within the social sciences, which occurred in parallel with the practice shift (significant examples include the works of Cooren, 2000; Fauré & Bouzon, 2010; Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Van Every, 1993).

Regardless of the theoretical grounding, communication is perceived as a complex and uncertain process of construction of meaning that entails active participation by members (Detchessahar, 2003; Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983; Weick, 1986) and that constitutes organizing (Cooren, 2000; Cooren, et al., 2011). These authors are interested less in the way that individuals exchange information and knowledge than in the way they collectively and interactionally construct (or have constructed) knowledge to act together (Arnaud, 2011a; Arnaud & Mills, 2012; Cooren, Taylor, & Van Emery, 2006). Strongly inspired by the works of Giddens (1984) on the duality of structure, this perspective considers that knowledge constitutes both the prerequisite of its interactions and a result thereof, becoming one of the very bases of collaboration. Knowledge evolution is driven by actors' daily interactions, the problems they encounter, and the arrival of new human or nonhuman participants. The (ac)cumulative nature of this perspective directly echoes Giddens's (1984) structuring process which Boden (1994) calls lamination, and Berger and Luckman (1966) refer to as sedimentation.

These works have contributed significantly to the renewal of interpretivist/communicational approaches to the organization and the firm (Fauré & Arnaud, 2014), yet the type of empirical study conducted has not yet allowed full integration of the role of management, understood as the "So what?" question. Indeed, empirical analyses have focused on extraordinary situations (Cooren & Fairhurst, 2004) or management committee meetings (Cooren, 2004), in a direct extension of previous research (Boden, 1994; Weick & Roberts, 1993). Further, these situations concern actors who often do not know one another and probably will not have to interact with each other in the near and definite future (as illustrated, for example, in the conversation between a customer and real estate agent in the study by Cooren, 2004).

Therefore, the analyses are often insufficiently part of a temporal and at least partly stabilized perspective implying dynamics of interactions between actors, which often corresponds to the situations of firms acting within a scope of managerial action. Therefore, it is not surprising that this prism of managerial action has received little or no attention from organizational communication researchers (Arnaud & Mills, 2012; Varey, 2006). These works have shown that under certain conditions, actors' communication practices produce resources that serve a collective action and/or competency.

Lastly, even if these two approaches do not constitute a unified paradigm, they share at least three beliefs about organizational phenomena: 1) one must go beyond functionalism and open the black box of organizations and organizing; 2) one must bring work back and thus study, observe and analyze micro (discursive) practices that are embedded in more macro contexts/discourses; and 3) there should be a shared belief that knowledge is both a basis *and* a result of interactions and conversations.

PART 2: OVERVIEW OF ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue brings together eight empirical articles that address collective action from communicational and practice perspectives. The articles went through several iterations, which, at each stage, advanced and developed with help from dozens of anonymous reviewers across different disciplines of management and communication, including strategy, organizational communication, human resources management, and information systems. The reviewers' comments and suggestions were perceptive, insightful and helpful. As the guest editors of this special issue, we are grateful for their reviews, feedback and patience. Without their contributions, this special issue would not have achieved its ambitions of both high quality and originality.

The research presented in this special issue contributes to the literature on CCO and the practice turn in organization studies by exploring the transformative power of strategic texts (press releases, charts, manifestos, CRM policy, accounting calculations, etc.) in various organizational contexts such as the construction industry (Le Breton & Aggeri, 2018), mountaineering expedition (Musca, Rouleau, Mellet, Sitri & de Vogüé, 2018), advocacy corporation (Albu, 2018), hostile takeover bids (Nègre, Verdier & Cho, 2018), an energy company (Burlat & Mills, 2018), advertising agencies (Baillargeon, 2018), a regional post office (Detchessahar & Journé, 2018), and a mid-size Danish company (Asmuß & Oshima, 2018). The discussion that follows proposes a (re)reading of the papers in order to outline what they can teach us about how to renew approaches to—and theorizing of—organizations and organizing. Although the question of the lead change is not directly addressed in the articles, interesting insights can be found in each of them. They all share a common thread: What makes a lead change successful or not? When can we say that the shift from one model to another is complete?

Let us begin this overview of the eight articles in this special issue on collective action with the striking story of a Darwin mountaineering expedition (Musca, et al., 2018). This expedition was confined to a boat for 15 days before starting the Cordillera exploration, and thus had to revise their plans concerning how much distance they could cover given the time remaining. As the authors argue, this passage “from boat to bag” can be interpreted as a shift from one “material chronotope” (in reference to Bakhtin) to another.

> *“According to Bakhtin (1981), a chronotope refers to a unique configuration of time and space organizing a specific literary genre; as such, it offers a way of understanding the world. This notion has already been used in management studies in order to explain how meanings relative to change transform over time, leaving aside the materiality of the chronotopes (Boje, Haley & Sailors, 2016; Lancione & Clegg, 2013; Musca, Rouleau, & Fauré, 2014; Vaara & Pedersen, 2013). We are proposing here to reinstate the Bakhtinian notion of a chronotope as a tangible entity setting the stage for ‘the fusion of space and time,’ as it pertains to a discursive genre. The notion of chronotope is articulated in the context of material artefacts or objects that intrinsically convey the set of meanings to be collectively framed, negotiated and then reframed. This perspective has led us to utilize the notion of ‘material chronotopes’ in order to better understand how adaptive*

> *sensemaking is materially constituted through both time and space" (Musca, et al., this issue: 706)***.**

This analysis builds on a previous analysis of the same case study that demonstrated the central role of "discursive calculation" in a further change of chronotope during the expedition (Musca, et al., 2014). After the mountain exploration started, the team members faced new difficulties (false maps, wrong measures, broken connections) that forced them to revise their plan each day rather than follow the expected route. In this context, the team rediscovered an old chronotopic calculation: the number of crows' flights per day, a calculative act (Fauré & Gramaccia, 2006) that then become part of a wider narrative about the expedition (reports, documentaries, etc..).

> *Two years later, all members interviewed since completion of the expedition had a clear memory of the context in which the expression emerged and clearly understood its chronotopic significance. The institutionalization of the chronotope during the film also reinforces the fact that the "crow's flight" represents the Gordian knot of the expedition's collective identity, becoming part of wider narrative about the space and time of the Cordillera. (Musca, et al., 2014: 144)*

The case of the Darwin expedition suggests that chronotopic shifts follow three phases or axes: objects and materiality (from boat to bag), numbers and calculation (from kilometers to crow's flight), and discourse and text (from local sensemaking to wider narrative). Each phase is associated with a spatio-temporal reframing of collective action. What is really interesting about the Darwin case is that it provides a sociological microscope about what occurs *around* the shift ("micro practice of splitting, contrasting, reformulating, repeating" (Musca, et al., *this issue: 724*)), when collective action oscillates between two chronotopes.

In hindsight, the time spent talking about alternative routes and the energy the team members invested in discussions appears quite futile. What is maybe more amazing than the irrational fire of passions before the shift is to see how easily all these fantasies are forgotten once the chronotopic shift is achieved. The shift is completed not only when objects and calculations have changed, but also when a new narrative or metaconversation (Robichaud, et al., 2004) surfaces. If nobody remembers the shift or talks about it, did the shift exist? Performing this storytelling is clearly the intention of the strategic texts studied in other articles of this special issue (such as Albu, *this issue;* Burlat & Mills, *this issue*).

As the article of Burlat and Mills (*this issue*) shows, even the most carefully designed shift cannot avoid unexpected uses or resistances, and sometimes fails to reach the objective. The organization remains the same. Communication has been "strategized" and calculations have been materialized ("gate," "charts") but practices have not changed, or at least the (lead) change is not visible to those in charge of driving the shift. From their point of view, unexpected practices of energy saving are simply that unexpected practices. From a broader point of view, however, these unexpected practices could contribute to a wider shift. People do not really care about saving fossil fuels because they are looking for alternative energy. Rather, this search is people's real empowerment: their materiality, their calculation, their story.

This tendency to fail (Taylor & Van Every, 2014) is not limited to the "energy company strategic texts" studied by Burlat and Mills (this issue), but is shared extensively by other "strategic texts" studied in this special issue. Failing here is used in a broad sense of "not doing *exactly* what was expected." You fail when you expect to cross the entire Cordillera in two months but get trapped in a boat for three weeks before being able to complete only a three-day course (Musca, et al., *this issue*). You fail when you spend millions on a communication strategy about energy savings and when these texts act in ways that block the achievement of their intended purpose (Burlat & Mills, *this issue)*. You fail when you claim to conduct a strategy in order to reduce medical leave and work disability and when there is no improvement on these criteria two years later (Detchessahar & Journé, *this issue*). Failing means disappointment, frustration and anger, but it also means learning, challenging and the possibility of success. In the shift they have to make, organizations also need to overcome the fear of failing. For creativity to develop, failures and mistakes must be accepted (Gilbert, Amalberti, Laroche, & Paries, 2007).

What is striking in most cases is the correlative tendency to talking for talk's sake or in the name of others, to dwell endlessly on unsolvable issues that are sometimes confounded by the simplest problem (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2007; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Organizations are noisy before shifting. Is all of this (meta, extra, supra, intra) textuality useful? Could it be that organizations speak and write too much? If we examine how this textuality is enacted at the level of financial conversation, as for example in the 66 press releases exchanged during seven hostile takeover bids studied by Nègre, et al. (*this issue*), the answer is not clear. Why spend so much time and energy in order to make the bid fail?

> *"Overall, the disclosure process during hostile takeover bids could be viewed as a succession of legitimation, (de)legitimation and (re)legitimation arguments. As a consequence, we find that in practice one important factor that explains the disclosures of one party is the disclosures made by the other. This shows the reciprocity of the communication between the bidding and target companies in the specific context of hostile bids. Finally, we observe that target companies often use symbolic legitimation strategies through their discourse as a way to obtain an increase in the offer price. However, they can also engage in a substantive legitimation strategy where the aim of disclosure is actually to make the bid fail." (Nègre, et al., this issue: 804).*

Are we witnessing the turning point where accounting numerical signs become "*simulacrum and hyperreality*" (Macintosh, Shearer, Thornton, & Welker, 2000), disconnected from reality? Are organizations condemned to this same old "*business of calculation*" (Fauré, Brummans, Giroux, & Taylor, 2010; Fauré & Rouleau, 2011)? Or is it possible "*to do more with numbers across accounting and finance, organizations and markets*" (Vollmer, 2007; Vollmer, Mennicken, & Preda, 2009). The article on "carbon accounting" (Le Breton & Aggieri, *this issue*) provides hope in this area by showing that "acts of calculation" (Fauré & Gramaccia, 2006) can sometimes, surprisingly, relate what is counted to what really counts. This finding supports the hypothesis that a subtle way of doing the shift is possible if the lead change rests on a concrete and effective change of "material chronotope" (Musca, et al., *this issue*) before turning "time, space and calculation into discursive practices" (Musca, et al., 2014).

At various degrees and levels, the research collected in this special issue deftly illustrates how shifting from one model of time and space to another implies the capacity to articulate chronotopic changes in materiality and calculation in a single story. What stands out in this rich picture of a new way of organizing is the sensation of organizations sometimes being locally "lost in translation," but collectively going in a productive direction. Organizations (and scholars) do not make the shift alone and indeed, cannot do it alone in a context where interorganizational relationships become the new organizational paradigm (Arnaud & Fauré, 2016; Arnaud & Mills, 2012).

If we take, for example, the case of sustainable development, it has become clear that a "green strategy" cannot be the rationale of an organization: something else matters that justifies the existence of collective action. Pro-environment (or pro-social) discourse does not suffice to change anything, and the best intentions and values of the world can sometimes even turn organizations into a "Mad House" (Albu, *this issue*). Are values such as "solidarity, subsidiarity and transparency" (Albu, *this issue: 868*) as well as "responsibility, sustainability" (Burlat & Mills, this issue) condemned to being treated with disillusion and cynicism in organizations? Or can organizations find ways to make concepts such as "truth, freedom and democracy" (Detchessahar & Journé, this issue) or "carbon accounting" (Le Breton & Aggeri, *this issue*) real?

This special issue shows how these shifts in practice call for *a shift in theory, i.e. for "a shift in perspective from a functionalist to a performative focus in management research*" (Albu, *this issue: 858*) and in methods, i.e. for "*a shift from data that are largely retrospectively generated in the form of interviews and surveys, to data that allow insights into the here-and-now, multimodal emergence of strategy activities*" (Asmuß & Oshima, *this issue: 903*). Papers in this special issue embrace this performative perspective and share views of communication-as-constitutive, organization-as-process and materiality-as-social. These premises enable us to study the multimodal communicative accomplishment of strategy-as-practice, change-as-routine and text-as-agency, thus decentering the functionalist perspective that would rather have studied strategy-as-strategy, change-as-change and text-as-text.

What is called "strategic" in theory is not always strategic in practice, and what is really strategic in practice is often neglected in theory. A strong conclusion emerges from these papers that interests scholars and practitioners alike: performativity is grounded in reciprocity and reciprocity is grounded in difference, contrast and resistance. Central to Cooren's (2010) metaphor of communication as ventriloquism, communication begins because of a difference and continues by extending differences rather than by reducing them.

This strong claim is the cornerstone of these articles' arguments and discussions. Recognizing that resistance is constitutive of communication and organizations first explains "*why strategic texts can act in ways that block the achievement of their intended purpose and instead exhibit alternative forms of agency*" (Burlat & Mills, *this issue*), why "*hostile takeover bids attract much attention—both from the media and the general public, especially when a 'fierce battle' takes place between the bidding and target companies*" (Negre, et al., *this issue*), why "*values (…) constitute a Hydra organization: the more some managers try to fix, clarify or eliminate values in the name of hypocrisy, the faster the values emerge, motivating other managers to act (often in contradictory manners)*" (Albu, *this issue: 877*), why "*some regions fail to act as catalysts for innovation in spite of the socio-economic conditions required to promote creative development*" (Baillargeon, *this issue: 938)* and why "*key objects suddenly* *act as spatiotemporal triggers and enact a radical shift in sensemaking*" (Musca, et al., *this issue: 732*).

Second, this claim provides directions about what to do in practice once it is acknowledged in theory that organization and communication result from resistance, contradiction, failure and emergence: how to manage carefully "*strategic episodes*" by setting up Habermasian conditions for a free and genuine dialogue (Detchessahar & Journé, *this issue*) and for equalitarian and inclusive meetings (Asmuß & Oshima, *this issue: 902*); or how to do more with numbers by using a "*strategic practice of calculation*" that enables new subjects to exist, provokes actions and transforms organizations (Le Breton & Aggeri, *this issue*).

People (consumers, stakeholders, managers, employees), texts (press releases, charters of values, carbon accounting documents, advertisements), objects (bags, computers) and artefacts (regions) tend not to do what is expected of them. This is precisely why communication is needed. Recognizing this is not a source of powerlessness. On the contrary, it can empower organizations considerably. Organizations exist by rendering more visible what is fundamental, even if what is fundamental "*[appears] in inconspicuous or indirect ways to most organizational subjects"* (Albu, *this issue: 878)*. They grow by extending the scope of radical shifts, madness momentum and discursive struggles they can deal with, as perfectly illustrated by the extreme case of the Darwin expedition.

The editors-authors of this introduction to the special issue are the only ones responsible for these interpretations, and hope that the other contributors-authors will forgive the inevitable "resistance" required by this ventriloquial exercise (Cooren, 2010).

PART 3: AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Both CCO and practice approaches provide opportunities for new creative research in this area. The eight articles of this special issue undoubtedly contribute to a better understanding of collective action at the crossroads of practice and communication approaches of organizations and organizing. However, we believe that further studies of collective action in practice could increase our understanding of this phenomenon. For instance, we still need to know more about when, and under what conditions, shifting is possible or how to learn and accomplish perfect 'flying lead' change. The question of how the practitioners' identity and identity work affect their practices and/or conversations (Johnson, et al., 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) deserves further investigation. Also, a sign of our modern world is a growing shift from talk-at-work as a simple way to execute work as required toward a more subjective and interpersonal form of talk as collective ways to innovate and be more creative. While such a move is not new for white-collar workers, it is less common among blue-collar employees. Under such conditions, we believe it is worth delving into the deep consequences for frontline workers when their talk must change in order to enact a strategic organizational change that disrupts their initial nature of work (Mills, Arnaud, & Legrand, 2013).

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