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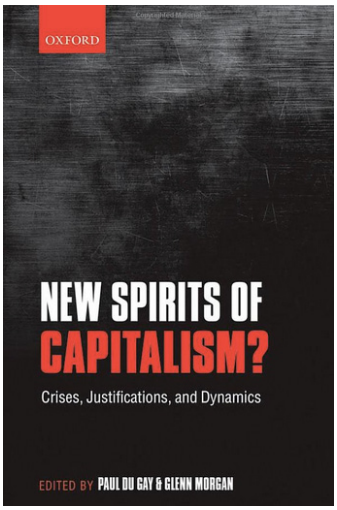

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Du Gay and Morgan's edited collection offers a thorough volume focusing on The New Spirit of Capitalism (NSC), a book published in France in 1999 and translated into English in 2005. There is no doubt that New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications and Dynamics is a timely landmark work among the growing body of organization studies inspired by approaches developed in the field of French pragmatist sociology (Jagd, 2011; Patriotta, Gond & Schultz, 2011; Cloutier & Langley, 2013; see also the M@n@gement special issue with Dansou & Langley, 2012; Taupin, 2012). This is particularly due to the fact that, as noted by the editors, Boltanski and Chiapello's seminal work is a weighty tome that presents several complex contributions to domains as diverse as sociology, political economy, social history, social critique etc. Whilst elucidating one theoretical approach stemming from that articulated in Boltanski and Thévenot's On Justification (published in France in 1991, eight years before NSC but translated into English in 2006), Du Gay and Morgan also take the opportunity to clarify the approach of the French pragmatist sociology (also termed sociology of critical practices or sociology of critique), which is often misunderstood.

With New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications and Dynamics, the editors intend to contribute to work in organization and management studies in two ways. Firstly, they conduct an extensive examination of the NSC theoretical framework and provide a critical evaluation of the ontological, epistemological and methodological principles which it contains. Secondly, the book paves the way for new critical perspectives of neoliberal capitalism and its modern forms. In their introductory chapter, the editors argue that NSC expresses a perspective useful for the explanation of the development of capitalism over the last thirty years, a period which saw the gradual domination of neoliberalism and which culminated in the 2008-9 financial crisis. More specifically, they emphasize the ability of NSC to account for the paradox lying in the peculiar way in which this crisis was resolved: the very same neoliberal methods that led to the crisis were the ones considered to be crucial solutions. However, in order to understand Boltanski and Chiapello's approach to new forms of capitalism, the editors rightly return to the theoretical principles of

the "new spirit". For NSC is an extension of Boltanski and Thévenot's On Justification (1999/2006), which suggests that modern economies contain multiple principles of evaluation. Following the editors' analysis, it comes as no surprise that the subprime crisis led to the perpetuation of capitalism in its current form: the "new spirit of capitalism" is an ongoing and unfinished process that integrates even the most acerbic criticism into its identity. This ability to assimilate opposition ultimately results in the perpetuation of its legitimacy.

The volume is divided into two very distinct parts. Section 1 is devoted to a fruitful discussion of the theoretical features of NSC. Section 2 presents empirical works that display the explicative power of NSC for the comprehension of organizations.

SECTION 1

The first chapter of Section 1 is written by Luc Boltanski himself (Chapter 2). This chapter addresses the contemporary developments within the sociological approach of French pragmatism. He offers a summary of the new perspective provided by On Critique, a book published in France in 2009 and translated into English in 2011, and a work that seeks to incorporate a social critique in the sociology of critical practices.

In the third chapter, Eve Chiapello develops the idea that a "new cycle of recuperation" is underway within capitalism. While NSC focused on the appropriation process which underpinned the 1970s protests against the systems of capitalism, namely that of social and artistic criticism, Chiapello tackles the new forms of criticism termed ecological and conservative criticism. Ecological criticism supports production and consumption on a local scale. Conservative criticism advocates solidarity-based capitalism with a human face. The framework offered by Chiapello provides an inspiring interpretation of corporate social responsibility as an answer to these new forms of criticism of the capitalist model. This framework could be further developed in order to interpret the expansion of social entrepreneurship and social business. Far from eschewing capitalism and wage labor, social entrepreneurship makes active use of these tools to play a role in society previously assigned to states.

In Chapter 4, Du Gay examines possible improvements which could be made to Boltanski and Chiapello's framework by adhering more closely to the works of Weber and Hirschman (see also the review of Chapter 12, below). This is particularly evident if we consider the current reinterpretation of Weber that led to a renewed understanding of the German sociologist's work (see for example Du Gay, 2000; Du Gay, 2005). Du Gay uses Weber to examine and criticize Boltanski and Chiapello's assumptions regarding agency. According to Du Gay, whilst in theory NSC fully recognizes human agency, it views any sustained adherence to the ethos of bureaucratic office-holding as "reactionary" or conservative. Du Gay's reading of Weber leads him to regard the ethos of bureaucracy in an altogether different manner, namely as an ethos adopted by individuals more competent than is usually understood. Revealing the conflicts present among assumptions regarding agency and personhood, he concludes that Weber appears somewhat "less amenable to being enrolled in Boltanski and Chiapello's project" (Chapter 4: 85).

Chapter 5 presents Willmott's contribution to the edited collection. Willmott underlines the fact that NSC does not refer to contemporary social theory or (critical) management studies to construct its argument. Two theoretical pillars underpinning NSC are then examined: Max Weber's definition of "spirit" and the central notion of "cadre" which appeared in Boltanski's 1987 work. After having pitted Weber's definition of "spirit" against that adopted by Boltanski and Chiapello, Willmott draws on McCann, Hassard and Morris (2008) to gather empirical evidence that negates the NSC framework. NSC describes a "connexionist" phase of capitalism that overlooks both financialized capitalism and the essential connection between the increasing dominance of the financial sector in the development of capitalism and the changes seen in the work of "cadres". It notably reveals the reductive vision of capitalism adopted by Boltanski and Chiapello. Designed as a "disembedded system populated by reified firms and markets" (Chapter 5: 120), Willmott argues that capitalism wrongly appears as a normative order failing to integrate what can be broadly classified as "the cultural" in the study of political economy.

In Chapter 6, Parker endorses and reaffirms the criticisms leveled against NSC in the two previous chapters. He also rejects the possibility that the sociology of critical practices could provide a critical stance. Unlike critical sociology, the sociology of critical practices looks to avoid the pitfall of deifying the researcher's observations. Indeed, critical sociology is inclined to grant a privileged position to the people voicing criticism, as if they were outside the social sphere. Whilst recognizing the laudable ambition of the sociology of critical practices, Parker maintains that NSC does not succeed in applying such a strategy in any concrete manner. In addition, through the provision of empirical examples, Parker aims particularly to demonstrate the irrelevance of NSC's assertion according to which alternatives to capitalism can never become institutionalized.

Thrift's contribution (Chapter 7) does not, strictly speaking, open a dialog with NSC. The chapter presents Thrift's own perception of the evolution of capitalism based on his recent work published with Amin (2013). After carefully reviewing the key changes seen within the economy through the lens of innovation—which he views as a new industrial revolution—Thrift suggests that "the underlying model of what constitutes "economy" is changing to what might be termed a "natural model" (Chapter 7: 172). The new capitalist model shatters the previous opposition which existed between ideology and economy and becomes "a model more like a kind of weather forecasting which itself created the weather" (Chapter 7: 172).

In conclusion, Du Gay, Willmott and Parker adopt a firmly critical stance towards the contribution made by NSC (Thrift's chapter appears offbeat in comparison). Their chapters agree on four main, interrelated criticisms of NSC that can be summarized as follows: 1) the theoretical framework is fragile, 2) NSC presents a lack of empirical evidence, 3) the work offers a generalization from the case of France which is questionable and 4) it reveals an ignorance of literature handling NSC concerns, and particularly of that published in the management field. Proponents of French pragmatist sociology would certainly contest those cases and return strong arguments to undermine them. In our view, a review of these counter-arguments highlights two main limitations of the edited collection. First, although it is not completely overlooked, the edited collection neglects the fact that NSC was written with

a view to understanding the form and development of capitalism in France in the 80s and 90s. Furthermore, the specific focus of NSC means that the framework it offers cannot be directly applied in an analysis of contemporary forms of capitalism such as financialized capitalism. Secondly, the reductive perspective produced through the underestimation of the systemic nature of French pragmatist theory and the decision to focus solely on NSC in turn, to a certain extent, produces standardized theoretical discussions lacking in nuance.

ANACHRONISM

As Boltanski and Chiapello remind us in Chapters 2 (page 50) and 3 (page 61) respectively, NSC constituted an attempt at providing a theoretical basis for the analysis of recent developments in French capitalism by focusing on the movement during which the 1970s protests were incorporated into the systems of capitalism. NSC focused upon the role played by criticism in changing the dynamic of capitalism from the late 1960s onwards, and in particular capitalism of the French variety. This is important to note, as such a focus prevents the NSC framework from being used in an unchanged manner as a tool with which to analyze the era of financial capitalism which unfolded during the 2000s. For example, in Chapter 4, Du Gay draws on the work of Hirschman in order to underline the critical potential inherent in applying a more autonomous conception of persona to the office context. He argues that the critical possibilities offered by such an approach appear "so 'anachronistic' and out of step with the norm and ideals of the 'projective city'" (page 95). While there is no denying that the theoretical approach the author proposes is promising (based on Du Gay, 2008), it was developed to explain the dawn of a new era characterized by what Du Gay terms the revival of a "neo stoic" perception of persona. Incidentally, we note that Du Gay reduces agency as proposed by French pragmatist sociology to a quest of absolute autonomy, an assertion that to a large extent ignores the underlying principles of the French approach (Nachi 2006:42). More importantly, by limiting the analysis to NSC, it comes as no surprise that the projective city is not able to encompass the office-specific concepts of moral agency distinctive of the 2000s. Du Gay's point is interesting, yet his argument is undermined by the fact that, from the perspective of French pragmatist sociology, it is not necessarily contradictory to pit NSC against Du Gay's approach, since the two do not discuss the same dynamic of capitalism. NSC deals with the 1980s and 1990s, while Du Gay exclusively uses examples that point to the commencement of a new era, the emergence of another new spirit of capitalism at the beginning of the 2000s. For example, in demonstrating the blatant disregard for office-specific rights, duties and obligations, Du Gay refers to "cases as diverse as the Enron scandal, the official (sic) inquiries on both sides of the Atlantic into events surrounding the decision to go to war in Iraq, and the collapse of Lehman Brothers" (Chapter 4:87) or to a press article dated 2002: "even the fulsomely anti-bureaucratic The Economist magazine noted evidence of a 'return to values that we thought were gone forever' (2002:118)." (Chapter 4:87). In the same vein, Du Gay and Morgan's introduction also uses the NSC framework to explain the 2008 subprime crisis. Referring to the more clarified approach of the sociology of critical practices may have evidenced tighter links than those

expressed between the two aforementioned conceptions of agency yet we will know nothing of them. The empirical contributions which draw upon the NSC framework in Section 2 confirm our interpretation: they regularly recognize that the approach offered by NSC does not appear to encompass modern forms of capitalism (see reviews of Chapters 10 to 13 below).

REDUCTIONISM

The book's attempts to capture the theoretical core of NSC certainly demonstrate a certain degree of success. They expose the weaknesses present in the NSC framework, such as its neglect of relevant literature from the management field. The book also identifies the fact that NSC lacks the necessary theoretical foundations to be considered as an autonomous, well-grounded theoretical approach. However, the book largely overlooks the fact that NSC is a simple extension of a theoretical framework presented in On Justification, rather than an entirely new entity, and that the framework on which it is based has since undergone considerable development. Consequently, many of the theoretical chapters lack consistency in the discussion they provide, in terms of the theoretical principles they take from the sociology of critical practices to open a dialog with other theoretical approaches (Weber, Hirschman, critical sociology). In fact, if the theoretical perspective offered by NSC is "loosely integrated on theoretical grounds" (Boltanski's chapter: 50), this is because NSC must be connected to the wider project of French pragmatist sociology. As contended in the editors' introduction (Chapter 1), the entire project of French pragmatist sociology as a whole is the level on which NSC can be understood.

NSC was a first attempt to reintroduce a sociological critique into the agenda of the sociology of critical practices, an attempt which did not as such respect its own founding principles. NSC describes a logic of displacement that has been diametrically opposed to the logic of categorization (Nachi, 2006: 71) and considered as a break ("rupture") with the initial theoretical and methodological approach proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot (Nachi, 2006: 171). Resenting French-style critique for failing to avoid structuralist accounts of society (Parker's Chapter 6) by drawing on NSC is somehow frustrating. NSC is, from one angle, the most structuralist work of French pragmatist sociology in that in this book, Boltanski and Chiapello themselves adopt a critical position which contradicts the original theoretical formulation of the sociology of critical practices. This is all the more important in light of the fact that an empirical work using the sociology of critical practices framework has to make it clear whether the regime of action considered is among those of agapè, justice or violence (see, for example, our review of Chapters 9 and 11 below). Central theoretical concepts such as tests and compromises have been developed in a regime of justice. NSC developed the notion of test of strength, which is defined as doing without referring to principles of justice (Nachi, 2006: 71). Furthermore, since the early 1990s, the sociology of critical practices has achieved many breakthroughs where these central concepts are concerned—see, for example, the entire edited collection by Breviglieri, Lafaye & Trom (2009), including Karsenti's approach of the test (2009).

MISSED INTERCONNECTIONS

The exclusive focus on NSC as an autonomous theory is a fortiori frustrating given that the insight provided by the eminent authors—most of them renowned specialists in critical management and organization studies— often interestingly echoes Boltanski's recent works. In this respect, we can identify two occasions on which opportunities for further inspirational discussion have been missed.

Firstly, we believe that the hermeneutical contradiction described by Boltanski in Chapter 2 (see also Boltanski, 2009/2011) constitutes a response to an interesting case raised by Du Gay. In Chapter 4, Du Gay reproaches Boltanski and Chiapello for ignoring a categorical distinction between the apparatus of government and the person of the state. However, Boltanski indicates in Chapter 2 that he does distinguish between institutions and other entities. In his view, institutions have the power to confirm and maintain reality from above insofar as they are bodiless beings. This in turn allows them to appear as "settled, long-lasting, and even external entities" (Chapter 2: 53). In contrast, individual bodies are those who speak on behalf of institutions. As persons with bodies they are necessarily situated in external time and space and are the ones that can fall victim to the "corruption of time". This theoretical approach satisfies Du Gay's desire to maintain a categorical distinction between the apparatus of government and the person of the state. Du Gay does, however, indicate that the approach fails to do it (Chapter 4: 88).

Secondly, the accusation of paranoia and of standing as a conspiracy theory which Parker levels against NSC (Chapter 6) directly and unexpectedly echoes Boltanski's discussion in his last book (2012, not translated into English). Parker draws on the notion of "dietrologic" to refer to the uncovering of explanations related to the underworld (Chapter 6: 125). He notes that both sociology and conspiracy theories attempt to unearth explanations for social phenomena and engages in a discussion aimed at distinguishing between the two. Boltanski dedicated Enigmes et Complots: une enquête à propos d'enquêtes (2012) to this very question in order to shed light on the notion of social critique. Based on the figure of the detective in crime fiction, the figure of the spy in the spy novel and then on conspiracy theories, his analysis aims at evidencing the features of any sociological critique. In a way, Boltanski agrees with Parker insofar as he acknowledges how small the distance that separates paranoids and sociologists is (2012: 319). He then discusses action that must be taken in order for a sociologist not to be accused of paranoia.

We thus regret that this inspirational book is less relevant than it could be, wasting relevance in that it favors dialog with NSC. Instead, it ought to have referred back to the theoretical foundations of the sociology of critical practices in order to trigger more informed discussion, forging more consistent and well-founded criticism of the sociological approach. Incidentally, Boltanski's chapter (Chapter 2) and even Chiapello's chapter (Chapter 3) make this clear in that what these chapters define as the sociology of critical practices is far from corresponding to the depictions provided by other chapters in the book.

SECTION 2

Section 2 comprises a number of chapters which draw upon both Boltanski and Chiapello's framework and empirical evidence to provide an insight into the changing nature of capitalism in various fields, all related to organizations. Huault and Rainelli-Weiss examine financial markets through the analysis of over-the-counter markets (Chapter 8). They cast light on the connexionist nature of OTC markets and, in doing so, evidence that this specific feature undermines the criticisms conducted notably from the civic world. The chapter usefully goes on to discuss whether or not the financial sphere can be rightly viewed as a domain within what Boltanski terms "the justification regime". It is argued that the increasing complexity and technicality of modern financial markets is such that a "domination regime" is in fact in place where the civic world is unable to denounce its own subordination.

Kristensen uses NSC to account for the evolution of capitalism in Nordic countries between 1995 and 2005 (Chapter 9). More specifically, he examines the form that the projective city takes in relation to the development of an active labor market under the aegis of Nordic welfare states. Indeed, the projective city unveils the economic consensus negotiated in Nordic countries around the positive aspects of mobility and disregarding the negative consequences of this consensus in terms of inequality. In the same way, a discussion on the type of regime considered for the study, such as that provided by Huault and Rainelli, would have been valuable in order to detail the forms of test conducted and examine the extent to which the notion of justice order could be rightly applied to this geographical region.

Ötsch, Pasqualoni and Scott's chapter (Chapter 10) draws on an analysis of the contemporary social movement organization Attac (Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financières et l'Aide aux Citoyens). The authors acknowledge that, in many respects, Attac "resembles the networker of the project cité" (page 236) in order to seek a new legitimacy as regards their mission to "disarm markets". However, they also demonstrate that Attac more strikingly includes a search for an efficient external political impact through, for example, the acquisition of expert technical knowledge. Attac can therefore be seen as a compromise between the projective and industrial worlds. Ötsch, Pasqualoni and Scott's conclusion is congruous with our previous review of the theoretical section insofar as they emphasize that whilst in the 1990s it was still appropriate to speak about a new "spirit" of capitalism, it is now necessary to develop a new framework in order to account for contemporary forms of capitalism and the associated domination processes at play.

Serrano-Velarde (Chapter 11) attempts to explain the ideological shift in higher education policy-making in the European Union. She observes that the European policy discourse provides a moral backdrop against which capitalist activities in higher education can legitimately take place, while rejecting other forms of justification for such activities. The chapter contributes to the ever-growing corpus of researches examining the pervasiveness of benchmarking as an instrument of domination in public policy (Bruno & Didier 2013). The chapter features a slight theoretical inconsistency that might explain the author's attempt in her conclusion to understand the difficulty she experienced in implementing Boltanski and Thévenot's model. The work studies the constitution of a test of strength by focusing on the legitimacy tests

and systems of equivalence, in spite of the fact that these are recognized as distinctive varieties of test (Nachi 2006: page 71).

In Chapter 12, Du Gay develops further one theoretical argument presented in Chapter 4 by applying it to the office-based commitments of professional civil servants, mainly in Britain. According to Du Gay, the demands for increased "responsiveness" and "enthusiasm" associated with a "New Spirit of Public Management" should be viewed with considerable skepticism. Du Gay bases this contribution on two observations. First, he believes the bureaucratic nature of the ethos does not intrinsically lead to managerial enslavement. The call for getting rid of Weber's bureaucracy is often based on an erroneous understanding of the German sociologist's concept of bureaucratic form. Du Gay believes that the implementation of policies inspired by a post-bureaucratic ethos (which the author himself terms the "ethics of enthusiasm") does paradoxically bring forth the potential for new forms of managerial domination.

Ekman concludes the edited collection with a work based on two ethnographic cases (Chapter 13). She unveils the connexionist work settings present in two media organizations from the creative knowledge industry in order to explain increasing levels of vulnerability and flexibility in the workplace. Adopting a micro-sociological perspective, the study details the contradictory processes at the roots of this movement. The connexionist logic underpinning the modern workplace leads to process which concludes in the heightened vulnerability of employees, management and organizations.

Indeed, the theoretical problems identified during the review of the first section of the edited collection are subsequently confirmed by the operational use of the approach in the empirical chapters found in Section 2. Furthermore, this reinforces the need to clarify those theoretical concerns in order to reveal new forms of managerial domination (Boltanski 2009/2011). Ötsch, Pasqualoni and Scott (Chapter 10: 247) rightly question the relevance of a regime of justice and wonder whether the process of justification can still usefully be applied when seeking to explain the domination process associated with modern financial markets (see also the chapter by Huault and Rainelli-Weiss). On the contrary, some empirical works overlook the need to use NSC and the various regimes of action in a self-reflexive way. Kristensen's chapter (Chapter 9) appears to describe a case falling under the legitimacy regime using the logic of displacement, whilst Serrano-Velarde and Elkman's works (Chapters 11 and 13 respectively) apply the logic of displacement and of categorization in tandem.

Overall, the authors of New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications and Dynamics provide us with valuable insights into the state of capitalism in the early 21st century. However, we ultimately regret that the book constitutes a missed opportunity to clarify the scope of the NSC framework to the English-speaking academic community. Indeed, this community tends to consider NSC as "path-breaking" (Chapter 5: 99) while this epithet should instead be applied to French pragmatist sociology as a whole. The fact that NSC was translated into English in 2005 and On Justification only in 2006 may have played a decisive role in creating such a misunderstanding. NSC must be understood as one stage in the "research programme" of French-style critique. Furthermore, the understanding of the theoretical framework as a whole has in no way been facilitated by the ongoing development of the approach in the last decade, which may give the impression of a moving target. However, adhering solely to NSC and even On Justification, first published in 1999 and 1991 respectively, would mean laying waste to the fruitful developments in the sociological framework to have emerged over the last 15 years.

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