
A history of vocational ethics and professional identity: How organization scholars navigate academic value spheres

human relations
2017, Vol. 70(4) 461–487
© The Author(s) 2016
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0018726716660370
journals.sagepub.com/home/hum



Susanne Ekman

Roskilde University, Denmark

Abstract

In recent years, Michael Burawoy has sparked a discussion about the role of social sciences in society. He calls for an increased interaction between different value spheres in social science, because ‘the flourishing of each depends on the flourishing of all.’ To ensure this interaction, he proposes that we pay better attention to the micro-politics of academic lives, not least their historical, geographical and biographical specificity. The current article contributes to this agenda, contextualized in the field of Organization Studies. It analyzes the vocational micro-politics of organization scholars, especially with a focus on historical and biographical specificity. Based on in-depth interviews with 15 senior scholars, many considered founding figures of Organization Studies, I analyze how they navigate value tensions in different historical periods. To understand historical differences, the article draws on a combination of Burawoy and Boltanski and Chiapello. To understand individual navigation of value spheres, I apply terms such as selective incorporation, decoupling, antagonism and double attribution. In the end, I discuss how some scholars navigate spheres to ensure mutual correction while others navigate them to enable opportunism. The latter is a tempting strategy for young scholars trying to survive extreme performance pressures today.

Keywords

academic careers, Burawoy, ethics, history, identity, memories, navigating tensions, organization theory, value sphere, Weber

Corresponding author:

Susanne Ekman, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Universitetsvej 11, Roskilde 4000, Denmark.

Email: ekman@ruc.dk

In recent years, Michael Burawoy (2004, 2010, 2013) has sparked a discussion about the role of social sciences in society. His position is a reaction against the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein who argues that our turbulent times call for a unification of science across disciplines (Wallerstein and Young, 1997). Burawoy's response to this agenda is skeptical. He writes:

Wallerstein's is, indeed, a heavenly ideal and that is its problem, its abstract character. We learn so little about the possibilities and obstacles to its realization in the here and now; the dilemmas of being simultaneously analytical, moral and political. (Burawoy, 2010: 52)

According to Burawoy, a unified science would most likely be to the detriment of smaller, more critical disciplines that would end up being swallowed by the more dominant ones (Burawoy, 2013: 7). In this scenario, social sciences would simply be reduced to economics, he argues. Furthermore, Burawoy shares Michel Foucault's skepticism about 'universal intellectuals' who claim to offer universal truths (Burawoy, 2010: 52). Instead, Foucault advocated for 'specific intellectuals' who are transparent and reflexive about their contingent perspective (see Foucault, 1984: 70).

Burawoy shares Foucault's advocacy of specificity. Rather than unifying disciplines, he calls for an increased *interaction* between different value spheres in social science, because 'the flourishing of each depends on the flourishing of all' (Burawoy, 2004: 1611). There are four distinct value spheres in the social sciences, according to Burawoy. They focus on different academic ideals, namely profession, critique, policy and public debate respectively (more on this later). Consequently, they also grapple differently with the moral tensions between analysis, morality and politics that are inherent in academic work. To ensure interaction between these spheres, Burawoy proposes that we pay better attention to the micro-politics of academic lives, not least their historical, geographical and biographical specificity (Burawoy, 2010: 54). In lieu of utopian ideals about universal intellectuals who master the unification of contrasting value spheres, we should view the academic as a 'humble specialist' (Burawoy, 2010: 52). This humble specialist must find more or less tension-ridden ways to navigate moral dilemmas. If we learn about the specificities of these micro-politics, we might help prevent excessive autonomization of the various value spheres and the swelling of their respective pathologies, Burawoy (2004: 1611) argues.

The current article is meant as a contribution to this agenda, contextualized in the field of Organization Studies. It seeks to give insight into the vocational micro-politics of organization scholars, especially with a focus on historical and biographical specificity. Based on in-depth interviews with 15 senior scholars, many considered founding figures of Organization Studies, I present personal and rich examples of navigating value tensions in different historical periods: when the field was in its early infancy; during its more institutionalized period coinciding with the great protest movements; and finally during the neoliberalization of university. The interviewees are primarily from the USA or UK¹ and were educated sometime between the 1950s and 1970s. In short, they offer the historical and biographical insight into academic micro-politics that Burawoy calls for.

The article attempts to let rich historical data counter both nostalgia and the so-called 'cult of the new' (Gibson and Klocker, 2004: 427; see also Du Gay and Vikkelsø, 2013). I believe that the two tendencies contribute to a general polarization at the expense of

contradictions and grey zones. In defense of such grey zones, I attempt to show that each historical period and each individual academic's life involve ethical struggles. If we let go of both nostalgia and the cult of the new, focusing instead on empirical insights into historical and biographical struggles, we may be better equipped for the role of 'humble specialists,' thus keeping the Organization Studies field vibrant with complementarities and contradictions.

To pursue this agenda, I explore three different periods in Organization Studies with a focus on professional ethics and identity. These foci are unpacked through a theoretical lens of mainly Weberian ilk. Drawing on vocabulary from Weberians such as Boltanski and Chiapello on the one hand, and Weber-inspired Burawoy on the other, I investigate how Organization Studies scholars make sense of their vocation, which value sphere they tend to favor, and how they engage with the contradictions and complementarities of different value spheres during those three periods. The project is Weberian in the sense that it pursues the very same question he did in 'Science as a vocation' (1946):

Every scientific 'fulfilment' raises new 'questions' . . . But what does he who allows himself to be integrated into this specialized organization, running on ad infinitum, hope to accomplish that is significant in these productions that are always destined to be outdated? . . . what then does science actually and positively contribute to practical and personal 'life'? Therewith we are back again at the problem of science as a 'vocation.' (Weber, 1946: 135, 141)

The 'problem' with science, according to Weber, is that it cannot answer the great universal and existential questions, '*It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations*' (Weber, 1946: 152, emphasis added). It must resign itself to a different domain. But in this domain it can still '*stand in the service of moral forces*' (Weber, 1946: 152, emphasis added) via clarification, calculation, technical control and knowledge of interrelated facts. How do scholars in specific historical periods and with specific biographical backgrounds deal with this 'problem' of science? How do they find their sense of purpose in the midst of their own scientific partiality and ephemerality, and how do they deal with the competing 'moral forces' (analysis, critique, public debate and so on) through which they might frame their vocation? I attempt to answer these questions, first by making a brief outline of three historical periods in Organization Studies. After this, I present my theoretical vocabulary, and then I proceed to the detailed analysis.

Organization Studies from 1950 to now

Drawing on James March, one can roughly divide postwar Organization Studies history into three major periods: first, professionalization (1950s–1960s); second, institutionalization and protest movements (1960s–1970s); and third, neoliberalization (1980s–now) (March, 2007). In his historical study of business schools in America, Rakesh Khurana (2007) describes the pre-1950s as characterized by an intense focus on moral obligations and the cultivation of a professional ethos serving the good of society. However, the academic level was low: empirical material was mainly anecdotal, based on personal experience, and broad generalizations were rarely subjected to rigorous testing (Khurana, 2007: 197). In the professionalization period during the 1950s and 1960s, the vocational

or trade school character of business education was challenged and there was a demand to improve academic standards. In the USA, this followed in the wake of reports on higher business education sponsored by the Carnegie and Ford Foundations, published in 1959. Both reports formulated clear directions to adopt scientific methodologies from the disciplines and to focus on graduate education. James March mentions significant scholars such as Charles Lindblom, Robert Merton and Herbert Simon who 'identified with, and were viewed as part of, the effort to make postwar studies of human behavior and institutions more scientific' and who aimed 'to increase the role of academic knowledge and methods and reduce the role of experiential knowledge and methods in management education' (March, 2007: 13). In this period, business schools imported large numbers of employees from the disciplines such as economics, political science and psychology. This exacerbated the already existing rift between practically oriented business educators who focused on concrete management problems and academically oriented scholars who focused on theoretical research (see Khurana, 2007: 282, 285).

The development in the UK started later. Not until the 1960s did the business school model arrive, following the Franks Commission Report, whose purpose was similar to the reports in the USA. London and Manchester Business School were first and drew heavily on the US model with a two year full-time MBA. In this period, numerous UK scholars, university deans and politicians visited American business schools to learn from them. This import from the USA was not always without problems. The UK universities were fairly conservative and often looked at instrumental approaches as inferior. Furthermore, British industry was adverse to the American-style professionalization and education of managers, regarding it as inappropriate that the state interfered with this domain. Also, there was a cultural clash between the British focus on managers as 'leaders' with charisma, character and decisiveness and the US focus on managers as technically competent (Tiratsoo, 2004: 121).

In the next period, from the late 1960s throughout the 1970s, business schools were more thoroughly institutionalized. In UK business schools, there was a preference for 'ethnographic, historical, operational, and systems methodologies reflecting the disciplinary bases of many of these early researchers' (Morris, 2011: 35). Much of the research was requested by government in connection with various reports, and business school employees often contributed to policy development (Morris, 2011). Generally, only very few PhD scholarships were awarded in this period (Morris, 2011: 36), thus making an academic career quite challenging. A number of UK-based journals had also been established, such as *British Journal of Industrial Relations* and *Journal of Management Studies*.

In the USA, the number of business schools kept rising, and the clear distinction of Organization Studies as a separate field rather than just a conglomerate of disciplines solidified. This was supported by the growing number of journals, such as *Operations Research – Management Science*, *Administrative Science Quarterly* and *Academy of Management Journal*. Epistemologically, the critical branch of Organization Studies expanded significantly in this period, challenging the former predominance of scientism (March, 2007). Universities all over the world witnessed massive student protests driven by left-wing politics and anti-establishment ideals. Largely organized by the New Left, the student movement had a conglomerate of demands ranging from pacifism, anti-racism and gender

equality to equal pay and anti-consumerism. In the UK, London School of Economics was a stronghold for New Left students, and in the USA the student movement literally exploded: 'During the entire school year of 1969–70, the FBI listed 1,785 student demonstrations, including the occupation of 313 buildings' (Katsiafikas, 1987: 45).

During the neoliberalization period from 1980 onwards, the university system has witnessed significant changes, including 'greater managerial power, structural centralization, substantial growth of organization size, rising student-staff ratios, more emphasis on marketing and business generation and the rationalization and computerization of administrative structures' (Parker and Jary, 1995: 324). In addition to this, universities have become increasingly dependent on measured performance in order to attract funding (Prichard and Willmott, 1997: 297; Reed, 2009: 691). The institutional consequences include standardization, international ranking, performance management and professionalization of university management according to corporate ideals (Antunes and Thomas, 2007; Khurana, 2007; March, 2007, Scott, 1995; Williams, 1997). During this process, the US business school model has become by far the dominant around the world (Antunes and Thomas, 2007). The intensified pressure to publish is exacerbating the gap between elite and a proletariat in Academia, yet at the same time, there are more academic positions available. Paradigmatically, the Organization Studies field has witnessed a post-structuralist challenge to Marxist inspired frameworks (Hassard and Cox, 2013; March, 2007). At the same time there is a rise in so-called managerialist approaches offering support to neoliberal values (March, 2007). The neoliberal changes have been extensively debated among scholars who problematize the 'McDonaldization' of university, the instrumentalization of knowledge, the marketization of careers, and the transformation of student–teacher relationships along consumerist lines, and so forth (Parker and Jary, 1995: 321; Prichard and Willmott, 1997).

Below, I will present my theoretical lens and then move on to a closer analysis of academic values spheres and individual navigation strategies during the three periods just described.

Vocation and contradictory value spheres

Max Weber has enjoyed a certain revival during the last few decades as new thinkers insist on using him for other purposes than sinister diagnoses of modernity's 'iron cage' (see e.g. Du Gay, 2000). One of the more famous revitalizations has been made by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005) in their ambitious analysis of the 'new spirit of capitalism.' In this, they use Weber to explain how capitalism is legitimized and made meaningful during different historical periods. The Weberian take involves a focus on 'ethics' as not only historically specific, but also specific for different value spheres such as science, religion, politics, and so forth. In other words, moral engagements and ethical practices cannot be regarded as universal in a Weberian perspective, but rather should be analyzed according to their specific set of values and associated practices of justification.

To operationalize their Weberian approach, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 10–18) name three promises that a spirit of capitalism must make in order to achieve moral legitimacy among its participants. First, it must promise a consistent system of safety – that is, instructions as to how one becomes socially integrated and physically provided for. Second, it must promise stimulation and meaning. Third, it must promise a moral code along whose lines the

participants feel as contributors to a common good. When these promises fail, the participants start voicing critique, and a new spirit arises.

Although Boltanski and Chiapello use ‘spirit’ to analyze capitalism, I believe that it serves equally well to study the different historical periods in Academia and Organization Studies. It gives us a good sense of the predominant moral sentiments of each period while also paying attention to institutional aspects. Their complete analytical vocabulary about ‘tests’ and ‘justifications’ is too extensive for this article, however. Instead, I look to Burawoy’s (2004) much simpler framework for understanding different academic value spheres. Since he too draws on Weber, the combination seems fitting.

According to Burawoy, one can divide the social sciences into a two by two taxonomy based on the following questions: knowledge for whom, and knowledge for what? Each cell in the taxonomy represents a different value sphere with regard to how these questions are answered:

Table 1. Division of sociological labor.

	Academic audience	Extra-academic audience
Instrumental knowledge	Professional sociology	Policy sociology
Knowledge	Theoretical/empirical	Concrete
Legitimacy	Scientific norms	Effectiveness
Accountability	Peers	Clients/patron
Pathology	Self-referentiality	Servility
Politics	Self-interest	Policy intervention
Reflexive knowledge	Critical sociology	Public sociology
Knowledge	Foundational	Communicative
Legitimacy	Moral visions	Relevance
Accountability	Critical intellectuals	Designated publics
Pathology	Dogmatism	Faddishness
Politics	Internal debate	Public dialogue

(Burawoy, 2004: 1607. Permission for reproduction of this table has been given by the author and Oxford University Press.)

The ‘knowledge for whom’ dimension is divided into an academic and extra-academic audience. The ‘knowledge for what’ dimension is divided into an instrumental orientation, that is, focused on ‘puzzle’ or ‘problem’ solving, and reflexive orientation, that is, focused on questioning norms and practices. Each value sphere relates differently to questions about the types of knowledge it attempts to produce, how this knowledge is legitimized, to whom scholars hold themselves accountable when producing knowledge, and the political (in a wider sense of the word) agenda behind one’s scholarship. Furthermore, each sphere has a potential pathology, which makes Burawoy (2004: 1611) argue for ‘reciprocal interdependence’ among the four value spheres. Were the spheres to be unified or to be completely autonomized, we would lose the important corrections that they provide to each other. We must, and here Burawoy (2004: 1606) quotes Weber, keep science engaged in a ‘value discussion’ to ensure its continued vibrancy.

Burawoy (2004: 1612–1613) also attempts to divide the history of social sciences into predominant dialogues between value spheres. In the earliest period from the mid-19th century (only briefly mentioned above), the dialogue was between the professional and public sphere, as the budding professional sociology challenged religious and vocational approaches of a more ‘public’ nature. In the interwar and postwar years, the dialogue was between the professional and policy sphere, as the more consolidated professional sociology became dependent upon funding from foundations. In the public revolt years during the 1960s–1970s, it was a dialogue between the professional and critical sphere, when student uprisings and changing moral sentiments questioned the ‘establishment.’ The current period with its massive social problems seems headed towards a new dialogue between the professional and the public sphere, Burawoy argues.

There are many examples in my empirical material that corroborate this historical set of dialogues. However, there are also many exceptions and biographical variations. To understand these variations, I look for specific navigation strategies between spheres based on the following terms: selective incorporation, decoupling, antagonism and double attribution. Selective incorporation means subscribing to a particular sphere, yet importing chosen values from another sphere. In other words, it means allowing for some degree of compromise while maintaining preference for one sphere (see Burawoy, 2004: 1610, 2010: 56 for a similar concept). Decoupling means subscribing to different value spheres at different times and in different contexts without reflecting on the tensions between them (see Van de Ven and Poole, 1988). For example, when decoupling one can subscribe to professionalism in one context and oppose it with critical values in another while ignoring the inconsistency. Antagonism means identifying with one sphere by regarding another sphere as ‘the enemy’ or ‘the constitutive outside’ (see Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 125). Finally, double attribution means attributing virtues from multiple value spheres to the same activity simultaneously, thus allegedly transcending conflict. ‘Double attribution’ is inspired by Günther Teubner’s (1996, 2009) analysis of coping with paradoxical demands in social practice.² David Stark (2001) operates with a similar notion, namely ‘heterarchy,’ which he defines as: ‘more than one way to organize, label, interpret, and evaluate the same or similar activity’ (Stark, 2001: 24). Both Teubner and Stark are trying to conceptualize strategies for de-paradoxifying contradictory demands while maximizing navigation opportunities. In addition, I look at emotional states resulting from frustrated navigation strategies, such as tension when there is unresolved conflict between spheres, and regret when there is nostalgia for spheres one is not practicing. All this is pursued in accordance with Burawoy’s agenda to learn about ‘the dilemmas of being simultaneously analytical, moral and political’ (2010: 52). In short, it revisits Weber’s original question about how scientists make sense of their vocation.

Below, I offer brief methodological considerations before proceeding to the analysis.

Methods

As already mentioned, my data stem from in-depth interviews with 15 senior organizational scholars primarily from the UK and USA. Many are founding figures in Organization Studies, having contributed significantly to both institution building and theoretical frameworks in the field. One group was educated in the 1950s and 1960s and

thus took part in the earliest institutionalization of Organization Studies. Another group was educated in the 1970s and thus entered the field during its phase of consolidation. The professors are spread fairly evenly along variables such as UK/USA, and value sphere orientation. There is a small prevalence of male professors, and I have fewer interviewees from the earliest period. For a brief table of interviewees, see Appendix 1. Owing to the sensitivity of the subject, they appear with pseudonyms. For the same reason, I only offer sparse information about each professor (nationality, age, gender). Although it would be of great relevance to the analysis with more detailed insights into the identities of the professors, anonymization concerns have ruled this out.

My interviewees belong to the academic elite and obviously represent a particular perspective on the history of Organization Studies. I have selected them precisely because they hold important positions in the community and have played an important part in establishing Organization Studies. When I started this project, I was interested in rich data about the formation of a field, and these people have partaken in it firsthand: they have developed theories that shaped the field for decades, they hold positions at prestigious universities, serve as editors-in-chief on important journals, play key roles in such organizations as the Academy of Management, and/or have shaped significant academic movements within the field. This means that the voices of the marginalized, be it geographically or institutionally, are present here only insofar as these privileged professors reflect on them. Extending the study to these voices would be of great interest, and surely add insights into the differences in available navigation strategies depending on status and position.³

Each interview lasted between one-and-a-half and two hours.⁴ Initially, I asked my informants to delineate their career from the beginning until now. This detailed narrative served as a backdrop for probing more about issues such as their academic motivation (curiosity, ambition, indignation, etc.), preferred research themes, relation to institutional and political context, primary differences between now and then, and so forth. I placed a lot of emphasis on existential and professional meaning in relation to their identities as scholars. Repeatedly, I probed about why they picked this field, what they considered important and valuable for the profession, and whether they had had periods of doubt, frustration or dilemmas. I wanted their narratives to include the personal developments, complexities and ambiguities of individual academic lives, while still paying attention to historical specificities.

When analyzing the data, I looked along two axes: historical and biographical. Historically, I looked for the academic spirit in each period and for predominant dialogues between value spheres. Biographically, I looked for individual navigations of the different values spheres, relying on the analytical terms described above. Below, I present this analysis divided into the three historical periods sketched earlier. In each period, I explore the three promises of the academic 'spirit.' Based on these historical specificities, I explore how the interviewees navigate between spheres in individual ways.

Postwar and professionalization

The earliest professionalization of Organization Studies as a field started in the USA during the 1950s and the UK in the late 1960s. The institutional reality and associated

promise of safety was characterized by the difficulties of becoming a member of Academia. Positions were few and hard to come by. Obtaining the coveted positions seemed to be a matter of both professional skill and endorsement from powerful professors. For example, UK Professor Carmichael, explained how his career in business school was sparked by his professor in sociology who was given a substantial grant and asked him to come along to the business school. Others mention mentors as similarly decisive for their career. However, once past the harrowing selection mechanisms, Academia promised a lifelong community of intellectual dialogue and stimulation, whose potential for continuity and collaboration would probably seem exotic today. US Professor Ryan reminisces:

I loved being a part of an academic, a scholarly, community of collaboration and working with others – actually talking to people who were going to be part of the conversation, hopefully, and then join the field. It was a collaborative enterprise and that appealed to me very much.

In other words, access to Academia was difficult and only for the few, but once on the inside, it offered a degree of safety that is unknown to young academics today.

The promise of stimulation during those decades came primarily from participating in early institutionalizing efforts on the one hand, and attempting to ensure scientific rigor and progress on the other. The scientific rigor generally involved a strong ideal about interdisciplinarity, which reflected how early Organization Studies was established largely by academics from the disciplines.

US Professor Stephens described how important it was for him to teach formal scientific skills in an interdisciplinary atmosphere to the earliest business school students:

I wanted all social scientists to know mathematics, to know what it was to model. So we took these innocent kids and required them to take two years of college mathematics which was not what they expected . . . I also wanted them to do close ethnographic reports . . . My fantasy was that our students would end up competent at all those things.

Equipping the field and the students with scientific substance was important to Professor Stephens during the early period of Organization Studies. He wished to help establish a new professional identity combining the strengths from different disciplines. Participating in the birth of Organization Studies allowed individual professors to have an enormous influence on the students:

This was the first year that this business school existed. So there were about 1500 students here, and 500 of them were in my class. The chancellor stopped me on the campus one day and said: 'I wish I could sit down with students and *not* have them draw a decision tree' [*we both laugh*]. But they took this as a competence and they started using it. It was nice!

As the quotes illustrate, this was a period characterized by an almost euphoric sense of new beginnings. At the same time, there was a strong sense of serving Science with a capital S. Formality and rigor were seen as the road to integrity and progress.

US Professor Ryan describes a similar preoccupation with formality and Science capital 'S.' He regarded it as a hallmark of good Science that it was theory driven:

We took a very . . . not positivist, but a post-positivist perspective. Really, I thought it was a scientific enterprise, primarily . . . In general, you could say that virtually all my work is theory driven, not problem driven.

In the UK, the academic ‘spirit’ bore many similarities to the US in terms of meaning and stimulation: there was the excitement of establishing organizations as a legitimate field of study, and there was the pride of developing formal scientific methods. Already during the 1950s, before the first UK business schools, a group of sociologists were studying some of the big industrial relations problems related to conflicts in British society; for example, in the coal mines. Professor Carmichael underscored the pioneering aspects, both of their organizational focus and their theoretical rigor, at that time: ‘They were doing what I would call theoretically informed empiricism of the kind which is now everywhere. But in those days this was quite pioneering and quite new.’

When I asked him what was pioneering about it, he replied:

That people saw industry and industrial problems and problems of people at work as legitimate areas of inquiry . . . People didn’t talk about organization theory, of course. They didn’t talk about organizational design, they didn’t talk about organizational change, and a focus on the organization as a unit of analysis didn’t exist.

Consequently, part of the excitement during the 1960s was to witness and participate in the construction of a scientific field. Carmichael described how epochal the advent of the first theoretical Organization Studies publications was. First, the initial papers from the Aston Studies were published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and then the Lawrence and Lorsch book on contingency theory arrived:

I remember the enormous impact that the Lawrence and Lorsch material had. That book was published, I think, in 1967. I thought this was absolutely path breaking . . . The big idea was ‘contingency’ – that there is more than one way of organizing something . . . Here was the first study I had seen which tried to link variations in organizational form to performance, and I thought: At last we have got something convincing to talk to a group of managers about!

In other words, the arrival of several significant Organization Studies publications, such as Lawrence and Lorsch, and the Aston Studies, helped delineate the emergent Organization Studies field and was impactful in ‘raising the confidence of people,’ as Carmichael put it, ‘because people were struggling to know who they were!’

While the dialogue between the professional and policy spheres was clearly the predominant one in this period, the other spheres also featured, and there were significant biographical differences in how the professors navigated between spheres.

Professor Stephens positioned himself rather squarely within the professional value sphere. He described how the thrill of research was related to ‘puzzles’ and ‘theoretical surprises.’ He was drawn to that special ‘social science gambit’ where things are not as you expect them to be: ‘You may think [the world] is fair, but it isn’t – somebody is

cheating on you. You may think it's a democratic system, but it really isn't, because it's a plutocracy or whatever.'

This fascination with counterintuitive phenomena was mostly practiced as an interdisciplinary battle with economics, which once again consolidated a relatively clear position within the professional value sphere: identity was formed through dialogue and disagreement with other academics, primarily:

For the most part that means poking fun at the economics. It means saying that economics doesn't have it right. So over and over we say that economics doesn't have it right, and we get a lot of credit for saying that. Not particularly from the economists, but from the others [*twinkle in his eye*].

However, nuances appear when we take a closer look at how Stephens related to purpose and common good. On the one hand, he made defensive declarations that constituted his professional identity in antagonism to a policy identity:

Well, the first sentence in most of my courses was, 'I am not now, nor have I ever been, relevant.' I never taught a course in which I tried to say 'what use is this research for society or for business or for whomever?' I just didn't see that as my role!

In other words, his academic identity was defined by NOT being useful. In this perspective, policy values such as effectiveness, and public intellectual values such as relevance would corrupt the professional endeavor of theory-driven exploration. Yet, at another time he made the following description of that period:

It's almost impossible, I think, for you to realize what the social science world was like when I started. It was a world of enormous optimism. We were going to change the world. We were going to understand the world. It was a world in which multidisciplinary work was highly valued and more or less routine – in which people from different disciplines talked to one another all the time. They all belonged to committees that were going to change the world.

So while it was a matter of principle for him to refuse effectiveness and relevance, he nevertheless saw it as an important part of the common good to 'change the world.' There was obviously a constitutive dialogue between the professional and the policy spheres during this period, as Burawoy argues, and in Stephens' case also between the professional and the public spheres. Stephens formed this dialogue as a defense of professionalism by way of antagonizing policy and public relevance. Yet, at the same time, he participated in the optimism of 'changing the world' via science – thus endorsing the very relevance and usefulness he categorically opposed in another quote. He handled the tensions between spheres via decoupling in other words: endorsing and antagonizing the same spheres at different times or in different contexts.

In other cases, the dialogue was characterized by attributing one's scholarly work to several value spheres at once, claiming that there was no tension between them. An example of this was Carmichael, who described his sense of purpose as committed to a 'double hurdle': The double hurdle being a need to achieve work which is of the highest

scholarly quality and to have a policy of practice impact. It is not either or, it is not a dichotomy, it is a duality.

Although Carmichael too was concerned with theory building and scientific rigor, he felt equally dedicated to practical relevance. In fact, rather than expressing distaste of relevance, such as Stephens, he expressed distaste of the ivory tower syndrome that he observed among some of his contemporaries: 'They were in a sense "pure academics", you know – I just observed this and thought it was bizarre.' He caricatured their mindset: 'I'm completely utterly useless to the world, I'm here to develop new ideas – isn't that great?'

His distaste of 'pure academics' included dogma of all kinds, meaning both purely 'professional' and purely 'critical' scholars. Placing the 'pure academic' as his constitutive outside, Carmichael instead advocated transcending value spheres. He approached this by arguing that 'context sensitivity' enabled him to attend to more than one set of values: 'I'm a contextualist, and I study things over time, and I study things in great detail in their context over time, and all managers are contextualists.' This ability to address multiple value spheres was a product of his training by industrial sociologists, Carmichael claimed: 'They knew that they had to theorize about conflict, so that people could connect their study in this coal mine to studies of other coal mines or studies of factories in other contexts, or with other conflicts.' In other words, their contextual sensitivity generated results that offered theoretical value owing to generalizability, practical value owing to concrete details, and reflexive value owing to continuous questioning of theoretical frameworks. Thus, it was possible to transcend not only the professional/policy divide, but also the professional/critical one, according to Carmichael. When I asked him whether there were ever moral questions or dilemmas involved in choosing which kind of 'relevance' to pursue, he answered:

Yes that is an issue: Who is the knowledge for? . . . All you can do as a social scientist is to make sure you are pluralistic in terms of how you collect your information: that you don't just go and talk to the bosses, or you don't just go and talk to the workers, or you don't just talk to the middle managers.

Attending to such pluralism methodologically made it possible to generate knowledge that offered theoretical substance, practical relevance, and critical edge simultaneously, he argued. His vision seemed close to Wallerstein's universal intellectual. But there was an important difference. Although Carmichael believed firmly in addressing both academic and extra-academic audiences, he made a clear distinction between being a *scholar* and an *intellectual*. In a purely scholarly field, value sphere tensions could be transcended by academic skill, but the jump to being an intellectual was more radical:

The difference between a scholar and an intellectual is that scholars get on with their things in their world. An intellectual looks up and says: Well, can I have an impact on this society which is around my world? . . . I think the number of intellectuals in our field is very limited . . . I certainly haven't engaged as a public intellectual.

In other words, Carmichael navigated the value spheres via antagonism to both pure professionals and pure critics on the one hand, and via double attribution on the other. He

believed that his methodology allowed him to address professional, policy and critical values simultaneously. Finally, he expressed regret about his lack of engagement with the public sphere.

His US contemporary, Professor Ryan, navigated differently. Much like his contemporaries, his emphasis was on the professional sphere, and much like Stephens, he was antagonistic to policy agendas without theory-driven exploration. Yet, he selectively incorporated certain policy ideals into his sphere of professional values – interestingly without dissolving the antagonism. This was achieved by distinguishing between *policy* and *short-term problems*. According to Ryan, it was possible to make significant contributions to policy while still being theory driven. However, attempting to solve short-term, practical problems was obviously a threat to professional integrity for him:

For thirty five years, from the mid-1960s to the mid-90s, I've been back and forth on planes to Washington and New York, working with policy folks at the Federal level . . . So the groups I have been working with are not primarily the executives that are faced with the decisions about what to do now. They are people that are trying to design long-term policies and research that will address those issues.

Ryan underscored that any engagement with instrumental problems here and now 'detracts me from the work I want to do, which is much more long term and theory driven.' In other words, Ryan was able to escape the tension between professional and policy ideals by incorporating certain elements of policy into the professional sphere and antagonizing other policy elements. Once again, we see how the dialogue between professional and policy spheres was significant during this period, but was navigated very differently by the individual professors.

Ryan and Stephens shared their dedication to the 'social science gambit,' which, as Stephens said, pointed out counterintuitive or puzzling aspects of normalized phenomena. Yet, as Ryan looked back on his four decades of organizational research, he voiced regret about having neglected a more public and 'society building' position:

I do wish that I, and that more of us, would spend time thinking about not just the way in which institutions can go wrong and the way in which institutional forces undermine activities . . . Part of what we should be doing is studying how it is that institutions can be strengthened to support important values, rather than just the forces that undermine them. I don't think we spend enough time, not nearly enough, thinking about how we can make these institutions work better – institutions that are indeed built to protect precarious values. How do you strengthen them? I'm trying to push that in my more recent work, and I'm sorry I didn't start on that 25 years ago.

In other words, Ryan contemplated the pathology of the professional sphere, namely self-referentiality, and in his old age, he looked for a correction via the policy and public sphere.

Summing up, the academic spirit of that period was predominated by the professional value sphere where the knowledge pursuit was theoretical, its legitimacy based on scientific rules, and the primary interlocutors academic peers. The professional sphere was primarily in dialogue with the policy sphere, but there were also other dialogues. Most importantly, there were individual differences in how the professors navigated the value spheres and constituted their professional identity in relation to them. As we shall see, yet

another set of constitutive dialogues and complex navigations arose during the next period when the critical value sphere gained momentum.

Institutionalization and protest movements

Following the earliest years of professionalization, there was a period of Organization Studies consolidation in the various business schools. Again, this period was a little later in the UK than in the USA, since the UK business schools are younger. The institutional consolidation coincided with strong waves of student protests in both countries, and a general atmosphere of critical momentum.

The promise of safety during that period was not significantly different from the former period: universities and business schools were fairly small, and the number of staff and students equally low. UK professor Rowlinson described the academic trajectory as 'a civil service craft thing.' The performance management of today did not exist then, and the demands were much more moderate: 'getting a PhD, hopefully getting a publication or two, being able to stand up in front of a class and not collapse in front of them, and do a half decent job' were the requirements for earning tenure. In Rowlinson's case, this meant that although he was employed in 1975, his first publication only came out in 1980. The flip side of a slower pace and a smaller system was the dearth of senior positions: 'You knew that the chances of you being promoted were a long time away . . . you were going to be a lecturer for a long time,' Rowlinson explained. In short, safety – and lack thereof – was related to slow pace and small size. There was much waiting and inertia in the career trajectory, but there was a simultaneous possibility for close and continuous interaction – not only between colleagues, but also between students and teachers. UK Professor Webster reminisced:

We would have meetings every week, and we would discuss things all the time. It was like a continuous seminar, which just went on and on . . . I mean, people really genuinely had a lot of time, and they were in there talking to students a lot of it (or to each other), and if after two or three years they produced a book; that was good. But we wouldn't expect another one for another five years or so.

Meaning and stimulation during those years centered on the consolidation of Organization Studies institutions on the one hand, and on a rising critical agenda on the other. As Burawoy suggests, the predominant dialogue in this period was between the professional and critical value spheres. However, there was also a significant continuation of the professional-policy dialogue from the former period. As business schools consolidated, the differences between more practice-oriented 'business teachers' and more theoretical newcomers flared. This meant that there was a fairly complex set of dialogues between the professional, the critical and the policy spheres. In some cases the professional and critical spheres fused in their antagonism to policy. In other cases the critical sphere selectively incorporated certain elements from the policy sphere while antagonizing other elements from it. I will elaborate this below.

The continued focus on the professional sphere and its quest for academic legitimacy can be gauged from the following quote where Webster remembers his first academic position:

We called it Management Sciences. So the notion was very much: It is another academic department and it has that ethos of a certain standard, and we are going to recruit people who aren't ex-business people. They are people who would otherwise be employed in an economics department, or a psychology department etcetera – plus the odd accountant, plus the odd marketing person.

As we can see, the focus was on academic pedigree, and there was a clear opposition to 'business.' This was a dialogue between profession and policy in which profession was cast as the promise of 'standards' in antagonism to policy's implied amateurism and servility to concrete agendas. In line with this, many of the business school employees from the disciplines were skeptical about the highly vocational MBA. Webster said:

I still struggle to see the MBA as a legitimate thing to be doing in a university . . . I don't really see it as having academic credentials . . . Is this sort of prescriptive stuff enabling managers to do better? Not necessarily.

However, interestingly, other professors with a solid anchoring in the professional sphere and with an antagonism to policy related differently to the MBA. Despite their antagonism to 'relevance,' they thought that teaching MBAs was a healthy exposure to different mindsets. So even within the same constellation of dialogue (professional vs policy), there were significant biographical variations in how the professors dealt with the tensions.

In contrast, another category of professors remembered that period precisely for its *meaningful* interaction with practice, and they lamented the current lack of policy orientation. Professor Carson:

We had seminars constantly with The Public Accounts Committee, and whatever we produced was immediately presented to practice and was discussed, and it was found very interesting . . . But after the public sector was told to imitate the private sector, they cut us out and turned to consultants . . . For God's sake, this is a discipline that was created to help practice, to develop practice, to reflect practice. But I think if we cease to exist, nobody would notice.

In other words, the vocational past of business education was still haunting the academic halls of Organization Studies, and the tense dialogue between profession and policy had a strong influence on this period. Organization Studies scholars found meaning either in antagonism to policy through professional rigor, in attributing both professional and policy spheres to their academic work, or in selectively incorporating certain policy elements into the professional sphere.

However, an even more important set of tensions arose with the intensifying critical agenda among both university staff and students. The general atmosphere of Academia was very different from the postwar years. Stephens made the following description of the protest movement years:

I had a glorious five years as a dean. It was a period in which faculty was sleeping with students, students were sleeping with students, pot was being grown in the backyard, and I got police reports every morning of who was doing what with whom . . .

Most of my anecdotes are just joyful. It's been a happy life. When I was dean, we had a commune on the campus . . . because I authorized it, and it was a kind of normal 1960s commune. It was spaced out people, some of them very smart, some of them totally spaced out. I got a telephone call one day, and they say: 'Our corn won't grow!' [*we both laugh*], and I said: 'Well, I'm not sure . . . I'm not an agronomist, but I probably know more about corn than you do.' So I go over and say: 'Show me where your corn is growing.' 'Over there where the chickens are running around' [*big smile, dramatic pause*]. So I solved that problem for them and I became head agronomist of the commune [*we laugh*].

There were crises almost every day in that time, but the overall feeling I have about it is that it was joyful. It was filled with these young people who were just discovering life and they were experimenting with life in all kinds of disastrous ways. When I had a student whom I couldn't do anything with, I would sometimes take them home and turn them over to my wife, and she had no patience whatsoever with their problems. So she would just set them to weed the garden, and that worked better than anything I could do.

In this general atmosphere of uprising and experimentation, new approaches to stimulation and common good arose. Intellectual stimulation derived in large part from scholarly exercises in revolutionary thought. As Rowlinson said: 'In the 60s and early 70s and mid 70s in the UK it was all about Marx.' Interestingly, this revolutionary fervor was regarded with skeptical irony by contemporary female professors, such as Professor Turner:

Industrial relations and studies of the state and Marxist critique was . . . what the boys did, because that was the 'really important stuff.' When you [heard] all this about 'emancipation' and 'domination' etc. . . . and you looked at their personal behavior vis-a-vis the younger or female members of staff – the hypocrisy or the domination, the sexual games that went on. You just saw a disconnect between the notion that this is politically the way to be versus the personal politics, and there didn't seem to be any inkling about this disconnect. So: 'personnel management is not a proper area because it is soft.' So 'the women can teach that. The guys won't be teaching that because it's not a serious subject.'

In other words, Marxism was an increasingly dominant source of intellectual stimulation for Organization Studies academics at the time, yet despite its location in the critical value sphere it did not always challenge existing power relations. Consequently, female professors practiced a two-front critical struggle: One, *alongside* their male critical professors against the self-referentiality of the professional value sphere, another *against* the very same male critical professors who practiced their own version of self-referentiality inside the critical sphere.

Despite continued gender conservatism, there was a general sense of indignation driving academic work during those years. The great optimism of the postwar period eroded and young scholars turned to left-wing politics in their notion of common good. Professor Webster explained:

I was increasingly aware of inequalities in society, I was increasingly aware of ridiculous taboos in society. So I had become very interested in the alternative movement in the late 60s, through the arts as well as politically . . . I was involved in sit-ins at the university; I got arrested

at an antiapartheid demonstration. So I became more and more politically engaged and politically interested.

However, the critical agenda did not always antagonize the professional value sphere. Some professors, such as Webster, attributed both critical and professional values to their scholarly activities. Despite a strong dedication to critique, Webster sought legitimacy from and felt accountable mainly to the world of Academia. His commitment focused on 'the community of scholars': 'So when I am working, that is who is sitting on my shoulder . . . They are, I suppose, those people whose work I am often drawing on and have regard for.' Furthermore, he spoke of his 'mission time' as dedicated to 'writing, supervising, supporting other colleagues, mentoring – partly impact, but also partly some sort of nurturing activity.' In other words, Webster made a double attribution to his scholarly activities, seeing them as serving both professional and critical values. He minimized tension between these two spheres by uniting them in their antagonism to selected elements of the policy sphere, for example the 'instrumental' and 'unprofessional' MBA.

While some saw professional and critical spheres as mutually beneficial, others regretted their own tendency to express their deeply critical orientation in the professional sphere, rather than in the policy sphere. For example, Professor Anderson explained:

What I've tried to do in my work is pretty esoteric. It's been a continued frustration for me that I've not found a way of really making it of broader interest . . . The only real audience for what I've focused on are [a few critical scholars]. That's a small world!

As we can see, for many critically minded professors the professional versus critical conflict involved selectively incorporating certain policy values while antagonizing others. Policy values with a critical flavor were regarded as a desirable correction to the purely professional sphere, while policy values with a professional flavor (often referred to as 'mainstream' or 'functionalism') were regarded as problematic.

Another group of scholars accused the critical sphere of dogma and self-complacency. For example, one UK professor with a strong dedication to policy and practical relevance said this about critical scholars:

They create small worlds which they live in, which they feel comfortable in, and it's a defense mechanism. They're not actually engaging with the world. It provides them with the opportunity to be on a moral high ground, and it's all very safe and predictable. They just see everything negatively and don't necessarily understand, or want to engage with understanding, why people might behave in that way. They don't go out and really explore what constraints people are working under . . .

Professor Carmichael made the same point about the self-complacency of critical scholars in a slightly more brutal manner: 'Me, Me, Me,' 'I want to be different, and special. My point of view is different and unique.'

In other words, several of my informants who primarily subscribed to policy or professional values regarded critical academics as hypocritical and condescending. They found the critical projects to be driven by power or vanity, rather than by the values that

they officially subscribed to such as justice and equality. Consequently, several professors with a professional or policy orientation requested correction of the critical approach by way of better methodology, or more commitment to practice.

Summing up, the period of institutional consolidation and protest movements was characterized by a rising critical sphere. This sphere entered a complex dialogue with both policy and professionalism where individual professors navigated the spheres in very different ways. Some antagonized the critical sphere, others supplemented it with professionalism, yet others selectively incorporated policy values into it, and finally some regretted not practicing it properly. Again, we see that the general historical 'spirit' was practiced with great biographical variation.

Neoliberalization

Since the 1980s, there have been significant changes in both institutional frameworks and academic 'spirit' at university. As mentioned earlier, this has been a period characterized by a rise in student and staff numbers and increase in performance management. Consequently, the promise of safety has changed: to succeed, one must deliver according to formal performance measurements. Those who excel at this enjoy enormous advancement opportunities and favorable working conditions. Those who do not are increasingly relegated to an academic proletariat. The ensuing academic ethic is largely informed by the ideals of project work, as described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). In order to succeed, one must constantly enhance personal employability. This is achieved through a focus on flexibility, innovation, network, speed and other entrepreneurial practices (Du Gay, 2004; Rose, 1992). Concretely, this means that scholars must publish profusely and preferably extend their relevance to as many fields as possible based on a continuous attempt to enhance their visibility.

As I have only interviewed senior scholars, the reflections on the current period are not narratives about 'making it' in neoliberal Academia. Rather, they describe how the conditions for younger scholars appear to seasoned and privileged professors. The oldest segment of my interviewees looks at the new university almost from a distance, because they are largely exempted from its demands owing to age and consolidated positions. The younger segment of senior professors is more enmeshed in new practices, not least as mentors and managers for junior scholars whom they must socialize into this new performance ethic. Their opinion of the new ethic is somewhat mixed – many point out that increased focus on performance improves academic quality. They also underscore that career opportunities are much better today. Yet all of them are worried about the extreme focus on publication and short-term research, and many tell me that under the current conditions, they would not have chosen to become scholars.

Given that the promise of safety rests on project-based and entrepreneurial values, the academic socialization and atmosphere is very centered on 'playing the game.' It is widely regarded as a precondition for survival in Academia that one masters this game. For some, this precondition is a source of stimulation, while for others the stimulation lies in challenging or resisting it. For example, Professor Carmichael associates game playing with academic skill and professionalism: 'You learn how to play the game, the recognition game. You learn how to produce good articles; you learn how to build

academic networks.’ For him, the current conditions spell enhanced academic quality compared to earlier times in Organization Studies. Pervasive review processes and publication requirements help consolidate Organization Studies as a serious field according to him. Others are more cynical, as Professor Glenn who told me: ‘It’s just a game, and it sure as hell beats working in a factory!’ Glenn considers the game as a strategic power play and pragmatically accommodates the rules, because they offer him certain privileges. Such pragmatic and cynical attitudes are regarded with sadness by other professors. For example, Professor Anderson made the following remark:

I think it is perfectly understandable that these cynical attitudes emerge and multiply given the context that we’re describing. The pressures in the context that encourage cynicism are massive, but there are alternatives to cynicism available and to take the cynical path, it’s just sad and destructive.

He continues in a more angry tone, addressing cynical scholars:

Go work in a factory, please, you’ll make more money. You’re a smart person and you will perform admirably well in some stupid programming job or something. You’ll make more money than you do as an academic, and you won’t be in anybody’s way.

Professor Anderson’s worry is shared by many of my interviewees, as the quotes below show:

Professor Turner: I think there is a lot game playing going on now, and I just think that trees are more important. [*i.e.: let us not waste paper on these articles, (the author)*]

Professor Ryan: People are picking smaller problems today . . . defined in smaller terms: ‘Can I find a set of data to mine that will give me a quick article?’ Rather than trying to say: ‘What are the important questions that need to be addressed?’ . . . Attention is deflected away from the larger business of what we should be involved in, and we are *not* in the business of piling up publications!’

Professor Carrie: I look at very, very bright, able people that I’m working with. I think: Gosh, they’ve got to plough down this furrow where life is totally dominated by way of submitting and how many ‘revise and submit’ you’ve gotten, and will you have another go with that paper and another go with that paper, in sort of ever diminishing circles, and I think there should be more to it than that. I think that to allow some value to be put on a more engaged and holistic encounter with organizations, with groups, would be a more satisfying job and likely to be more intellectually and practically engaging in the end.

However, despite this widespread worry over ‘the game,’ there is not a unanimous nostalgia for previous times. Some interviewees emphasize the increased professionalism and career opportunities today. Others point out that the previous system was elitist, traditionalist and patriarchal, and that the current publication practices give more opportunities to women, ethnic minorities, lower classes and first generation academics.

In short, the new institutional frameworks and promise of safety give rise to very mixed reactions in terms of stimulation and meaning. For some, they are an

opportunity for more expansive, equal and professional forms of self-expression, for others they are seen as a threat to academic integrity, and for many they are perceived as a mix of those two.

The same ambiguities exist in terms of approaches to the common good. Burawoy asks whether the current societal upheaval paves the way for a new dialogue between the professional and public sphere. Most of my interviewees are hesitant about taking this step. But all of them are in an intense dialogue with the neoliberal spirit and try to address it either from a professional, policy or critical perspective, or a complex navigation of them all. It is thus difficult to point out one predominant value sphere dialogue during this period – rather it is all value spheres engaging with neoliberalism.

For some Organization Studies scholars, neoliberalism represents an obvious common good. March (2007: 15) points out that many ‘young radicals’ are enamored with neoliberal topics such as ‘leadership, mergers and acquisitions, outsourcing and entrepreneurship’. These young radicals inhabit both the professional and the policy sphere. In the former, they teach the doctrines of neoliberalism with a basis in business schools, in the second they act as management gurus for the industry. In antagonism to this version of ‘mainstream’ Organization Studies, many of my critically informed interviewees approach the common good as a matter of providing alternative business school environments. As Professor Kramer explains:

I think one of the founding conditions of critical work within the business school is an assumption that 95% of the work in the business school is neoliberal in its orientation to both individual subjects, but also to what the organization and the state should look like.

For Kramer, there is a clear tension between professional and critical spheres. He is worried that Critical Management Studies (CMS) are losing their critical edge as they focus on self-referential academic debates. In other words, he finds that the critical value sphere has been colonized by the professional value sphere in a problematic way: ‘We should be arguing, I think, for positive alternatives, not endlessly turning up and debating Foucault and Marx.’ Academic subtleties should be replaced by intervention, according to him. Kramer mentions how a colleague once asked him: ‘If CMS was a political party, what are its demands?’ This question resonated deeply with him. In other words, Kramer antagonizes the purely professional sphere by turning towards selective incorporation of policy sphere values into the critical sphere through concrete alternatives and interventions. For example, he is very enthusiastic about a colleague’s idea to establish a ‘pro bono consultancy outfit’ for the voluntary sector.

Interestingly, although Professor Kramer is dedicated to critical agendas, he experiences tension between ‘stimulation’ and ‘common good.’ Writing about ethical and political aspects of management studies is important to him in terms of common good. However, this does not stimulate him particularly: ‘Of course there’s a satisfaction in thinking you’re right and saying it loudly [smiles self-ironically], but I don’t enjoy writing that stuff so much, because I know what I think and that’s not an interesting form of writing.’ The interesting form of writing, for Kramer, is artistically informed exploration. He likes writing for its own sake; writing driven by an aesthetic curiosity and a desire for authorial self-expression:

So there's a whole stream of things that I've done over the last couple of years, writing about circuses and angels and space rockets and sky scrapers and various kinds of objects or phenomena that have fascinated me for a bit, and I don't really understand why they interest me so much. I need to write about them, and there's something very ecstatic about that interest . . . It's more about me wanting to write a beautiful piece about this thing. Like the idea of writing a beautiful piece about shipping containers really fascinated me.

Professor Kramer's quote illustrates that there might be a missing sphere in Burawoy's taxonomy, namely art. The artistic sphere focuses on aesthetics and self-expression and addresses an audience capable of recognizing 'uniqueness.'⁵

While some critical scholars experience tensions between stimulation and common good, others are more preoccupied with protecting critical and professional virtues against instrumentalism. As we saw earlier, Professor Carmichael dissolved the conflict between classical professional virtues and neoliberal performance values by simply equating them. In a similar move of double attribution, Professor Anderson finds a way to attribute both professional and critical virtues to performance pressures. He ponders the new practices of 'revise and resubmit' and decides that rather than seeing them as late capitalist performance pressures, he perceives them instead as lessons in academic craft. These lessons, when made mandatory for all young scholars, actually help promote equality and access for groups who were previously more marginalized in Academia, he argues. In this way, Professor Anderson does not need to antagonize neoliberal performance practices, and presumably does not even need to make compromises. Much like many of my interviewees, he insists that he does not permit publication pressures to instrumentalize his writing: he is always willing to leave a paper unpublished if the requested revisions are not acceptable to him. Similarly, he argues that going for top journals is not a matter of accommodating performance pressures, but rather a matter of securing a wider audience for his critical message. In this way, the tension between instrumentalism, professionalism and critique is solved by way of double attribution: the same publication activity serves instrumental, professional and critical purposes simultaneously. However, Anderson admits that young scholars may have a harder time avoiding strategic opportunism in the publication game.

Many of my interviewees seem very concerned with larger societal issues and worry about the lack of relevance and impact in current Organization Studies. This leads us back to Burawoy's prediction that we may be heading towards a renewed focus on the public sphere. For example, Professor Turner describes an increasing discomfort with arguing about discourse theory in the midst of financial crisis and societal upheaval. She wonders how these academic exercises contribute to a broader set of concerns such as homelessness, extreme working hours, children without education, elderly without proper care, and so forth. Similarly, Professor Webster is worried about the lack of scholarly interest in acute societal problems. He mentions poverty, the environment, global warming, bullying and financialization. The common denominator of these problems, he argues, is that they are management taboos, and they require both critical and public intervention. Also from professors outside CMS there is a concern about lack of relevance. Professor Carmichael argues that Organization Studies does not address the truly important questions today – for example, decision processes in the large international

bodies such as the UN or EU. Nobody is willing to do the hard work of getting access, and consequently vital societal issues are left unstudied, he claims. These remarks indicate at least a sense of regret towards the lack of public engagement. Whether this regret will transform into actual revitalization of the public sphere remains to be seen.

Summing up, the neoliberal period in Organization Studies is characterized by a significant shift in academic spirit along entrepreneurial lines. This shift reverberates in the different spheres. In every sphere but the critical there are both proponents and critics of neoliberalism, but all seem to agree that neoliberalism is a vital topic. In terms of navigating the spheres, there seems to be an increased challenge in protecting academic integrity against instrumentalization. This challenge is handled very differently. Some antagonize neoliberalism by subscribing to critical values.⁶ Some subscribe to critical values and selectively incorporated policy values. Others are more concerned about protecting the professional sphere. And some claim to evade the threat of neoliberal instrumentalization by way of double attribution.

Discussion

Looking at the three periods I have described above, one could make a rough generalization: the first period was characterized by pioneering and optimism, the second by professionalization and protest, and the third by marketization and lurking disenchantment. Furthermore, there seems to be a certain historical specificity to predominant dialogues between value spheres, as Burawoy suggests.

However, as my analysis of academic micro-politics shows, every historical period and every individual career involve complex interactions between all value spheres. The merit of attending to these micro-politics is that we are humbled by the moral task facing scholars regardless of historical period. No period or institutional framework offer unambiguous blueprints for professional integrity. Every scholar must be in dialogue with her time, yet also struggle with more 'timeless' tensions between different purposes and audiences. From the scholars in this article we learn about some of the many ways in which contradictions and complementarities can be navigated. We see that most scholars, even despite strong positioning in one value sphere, display quite complex engagements across value spheres. For example, explicit antagonism to one sphere does not rule out selectively incorporating elements from that sphere. None of my interviewees have been able to escape ambiguity simply by resorting to one sphere, and none have been able to seamlessly fuse all four spheres at once. This is important to keep in mind when we criticize the moral state of Academia and attempt to offer alternatives.

Current scholars have voiced fairly dystopian descriptions of Academia and Organization Studies today. For example, Khurana (2007) argues that business school academics have lost their professional sense of obligation to society, practicing instead a short-term strategically or commercially driven service, informed by market logic. Giving up on the former ethos of contributing to a common good, academics become more or less willing hostages of a system with 'the same kinds of dysfunctional behaviors that quarterly-earnings deadlines had imposed on corporations, making them increasingly willing to sacrifice long-term organizational health for short-term gains' (Khurana, 2007: 341). In contrast, Khurana describes the original professional ethos as

devoted to a calling with a higher end than self-interest and exercised in a manner that is steady and reliable (Khurana, 2007: 324).

I am wary of Khurana's nostalgia. My interviews show, firstly, that every period struggles with pathologies of some kind, and secondly, that no period can be reduced to one professional ethos. That said, I agree with him about the danger of marketization and short-termism in Academia today. In fact, I believe that we may be able to understand the nature of this danger better if we apply the perspective of value spheres and micro-political navigations.

In a period when the focus is on expanding network and increasing speed, the different value spheres risk becoming a source of strategic branding rather than professional ethos. Young scholars under strong performance pressure navigate the spheres not in order to explore beneficial mutual corrections, but rather to ensure visibility. This can be done either by strong positioning in one sphere so as to become 'visible' and 'famous' for that brand, or it can be done by opportunistically mastering all spheres so as not to miss out on the visibility and network they each provide. This is slightly different from Khurana's claim that there is a market ethos today in contrast to a professional ethos earlier. While market values have indeed increased, they are exercised not by marginalizing the professional value sphere, but rather by perfecting strategic navigation of spheres. This is an important twist to Khurana's conclusion, because it steers clear of romanticizing the past, and provides a better lens for understanding the nature of today's opportunism.

Khurana laments the loss of long-term commitment and sacrifice to greater good. I agree with him that these virtues had better structural conditions in earlier times for those lucky enough to pass through the needle's eye into Academia. It seems that, today, sacrifice is becoming too risky for young scholars, and they are pushed towards 'shopping' value spheres instead. Concretely, it means jumping into a new sphere whenever the need for sacrifice presents itself in another. Although this involves active navigation of spheres, as Burawoy encourages, it is not navigation that offers mutual correction. Rather it is navigation that turns every sphere into a set of opportunities to be reaped.

While Khurana suggests a return to professional ethos as the cure for this, I side with Burawoy in the desire to keep the value discussion alive. Focusing on long-term commitment and sacrifice can be done from all spheres, not just the professional one, and navigating spheres in a complex manner can be used as a source of self-scrutiny and correction, rather than as a strategic branding exercise. For this to happen, we need to reward those scholars who are willing to reduce opportunities and visibility for the sake of commitment and sacrifice. In other words, we must call the bluff of shopping ethical value spheres when it occurs. With the current performance practices, this is not an easy task. Several of my interviewees admit that in their roles as editors, research managers or heads of department they end up exercising performance regimes vis-a-vis younger scholars that they are not comfortable with ideologically. With status and resources so strongly dictated by neoliberal values, it is difficult to carve out local and institutional space for those willing to resist opportunism. The elite senior scholars may be spared this pressure given their privileged position in the field. But most junior scholars have to grapple with opportunism to some degree in order to survive.

Maybe the recent trends in Academia – acceleration, opportunism, performance regimes, and so forth – will not change significantly until there has been another revival of the public sphere where scholars bring the 'problem of science as a vocation' into the

Agora to be debated. Or in the words of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), it will not happen until a new wave of massive critique challenges the current Spirit. It will be interesting to see whether such critique can supply alternatives other than mere nostalgia.

Conclusion

In the current article, I have presented rich interview material from senior scholars in Organization Studies, many of them considered founding figures in the discipline. Based on a Weberian framework, I have analyzed three different periods of Organization Studies since the Second World War, namely professionalization, consolidation and protest movements, and neoliberalization. I used vocabulary from Boltanski and Chiapello to analyze how the promises of safety, stimulation and common good were formulated in each period. Drawing on Burawoy, I supplemented this analysis with a focus on how different academic value spheres were in dialogue with each other. Finally, I used various terms of interaction, such as selective incorporation, decoupling, antagonism and double attribution to understand the micro-political navigations of individual professors. This detailed insight into the complexity and contradictions of professional ethics hopefully inoculates us against both nostalgia and the cult of the new, while at the same time equipping us to have vibrant discussions about how to pursue science as a vocation.

Funding

This research was supported by funding from The Velux Foundation in Denmark as part of the project 'What Makes Organization?'

Notes

1. Burawoy not only mentions historical and biographical specificity, but also geographical. Ideally, this article should pursue the many and significant differences between global branches of Organization Studies. However, there is simply not enough space to pay systematic attention to all three aspects, and I have chosen to privilege history and biography instead. I do mention certain differences between the UK and US context, but for a more thorough treatment of the subject, please consult: Augier et al. (2005); Morris (2011); Tiratsoo (2004); Üsdiken (2007); Williams (1997). For a discussion of the geographical division of labor in sociology, please see Burawoy (2010).
2. To learn more about how this is different from compromise, see Teubner (1996).
3. Obviously, extending the study to younger scholars would also open up for new nuances, not least on having been professionally formed during a period of neoliberal predominance.
4. The interviews were transcribed, each taking up 30 pages on average.
5. It is worth noting that in a period where personal branding and visibility are essential such a sphere has certain attractions. Many of my interviewees claim that there is an increasing focus on novelty and uniqueness among young scholars, but ironically they find that uniformity and predictability prevail in most of today's papers. The novelty that young scholars pursue easily becomes brand-oriented and fast-paced, rather than explorative and thorough.
6. Interestingly, other studies show that even those who react with antagonism often practice what they preach against: despite writing incensed critique of neoliberalism, they master and pursue the entrepreneurial approach to Academia with excellence and reap the benefits of it (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014).

References

- Antunes D and Thomas H (2007) The competitive (dis)advantages of European business schools. *Long Range Planning* 40(3): 382–404.
- Augier M, March J and Sullivan BN (2005) Notes on the evolution of a research community. *Organization Science* 16(1): 85–95.
- Boltanski L and Chiapello E (2005) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Verso.
- Burawoy M (2004) Public sociologies: Contradictions, dilemmas, and possibilities. *Social Forces* 82(4): 1603–1618.
- Burawoy M (2010) Forging global sociology from below. In: Patel S (ed.) *The ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions*. London: SAGE, 52–67.
- Burawoy M (2013) Sociology and interdisciplinarity: The promise and the perils. *Philippine Sociological Review* 61(1): 7–20.
- Butler N and Spoelstra S (2014) The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies. *British Journal of Management* 25(3): 538–550.
- Du Gay P (2000) *In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber, Organization, Ethics*. London: SAGE.
- Du Gay P (2004) Against 'enterprise' (but not against 'enterprise', for that would make no sense). *Organization* 11(1): 37–57.
- Du Gay P and Vikkelsø S (2013) Exploitation, exploration and exaltation: Notes on a metaphysical (re) turn to 'one best way of organizing'. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 37(1): 249–279.
- Foucault M (1984) Truth and method. In: Rabinow P (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 31–120.
- Gibson C and Klocker N (2004) Academic publishing as 'creative' industry, and recent discourses of 'creative economies': Some critical reflections. *Area* 36(4): 423–434.
- Hassard J and Cox JW (2013) Can sociological paradigms still inform organizational analysis? A paradigm model for post-paradigm times. *Organization Studies* 34(11): 1701–1728.
- Katsiafikas G (1987) *The Imagination of the New Left. A Global Analysis of 1968*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Khurana R (2007) *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands: The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Laclau E and Mouffe C (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy – Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- March J (2007) The study of organizations and organizing since 1945. *Organization Studies* 28(1): 9–19.
- Morris H (2011) Business and management research in the UK from 1900 to 2009 and beyond. In: Cassell C and Lee B (eds) *Challenges and Controversies in Management Research*. New York: Routledge, 30–55.
- Parker M and Jary D (1995) The McUniversity: Organization, management and academic subjectivity. *Organization* 2(2): 319–338.
- Prichard C and Willmott H (1997) Just how managed is the McUniversity? *Organization Studies* 18(2): 287–316.
- Reed M (2009) The theory/practice gap: A problem for research in business schools? *Journal of Management Development* 28(8): 685–693.
- Rose N (1992) Governing the enterprising self. In: Heelas P and Morris P (eds) *The Values of the Enterprise Culture: The Moral Debate*. London: Routledge, 141–164.
- Stark D (2001) Heterarchy: Exploiting ambiguity and organizing diversity. *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 21(1): 21–39.

- Scott P (1995) *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education*. Bristol: Open University Press.
- Teubner G (1996) Double bind: Hybrid arrangements as de-paradoxifiers: Comment. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE)/Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 152(1): 59–64.
- Teubner G (2009) Coincidentia oppositorum: Hybrid networks beyond contract and organization. In: Amstutz M and Teubner G (eds) *Networks: Legal Issues of Multilateral Co-operation*. London: Bloomsbury, 3–32.
- Tiratsoo N (2004) The ‘Americanization’ of management education in Britain. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 13(2): 118–126.
- Üsdiken B (2007) Commentary: Management education between logics and locations. *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 23(1): 84–94.
- Van de Ven AH and Poole MS (1988) Paradoxical requirements or a theory of change. In: Quinn RE and Cameron KS (eds) *Paradox and Transformation: Toward a Theory of Change in Organization and Management*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1–18.
- Wallerstein I and Young ND (1997) Open the social sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the restructuring of the social sciences. *College and Research Libraries* 58(4): 392.
- Weber M (1946) Science as a vocation. In: Gerth HH and Wright Mills C (eds and trans.) *Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 129–156.
- Williams G (1997) The market route to mass higher education: British experience 1979–1996. *Higher Education Policy* 10(3–4): 275–289.

Susanne Ekman is an assistant professor at the Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Denmark. She holds an MA in anthropology and a PhD in management. She is primarily interested in ethics and identity processes related to knowledge work in late capitalism. This includes a focus on responsibility, opportunism and professional ethics. She has written extensively on navigation strategies for both managers and employees operating in contexts of intense cross-pressures and paradoxical value spheres. Her research has been published in journals including *Organization*, *Human Relations* and *Ephemera*, and in books from Oxford University Press, SAGE and Palgrave. On a larger scale, Ekman’s work all revolves around the complex relation between power and freedom, and the question of how to form ethically sustainable communities in an era dominated by neoliberal practices. [Email: Ekman@ruc.dk]

Appendix 1. Table of quoted informants (pseudonyms).

Origin	Pseudonym	Gender	Education	Orientation
Older generation, starting career in Academia during the 1960s or early 1970s:				
USA	Professor Stephens	Male	Educated in the disciplines	Explicitly 'professional' orientation
	Professor Ryan	Male	Educated in the disciplines	Explicitly 'professional' orientation
UK	Professor Carrie	Female	Educated in the disciplines	–
	Professor Carmichael	Male	Educated in the disciplines	–
Continental Europe	Professor Johnson	Male	Educated in business school	–
Younger generation, starting career in Academia during late 1970s and 1980s:				
USA	Professor Anderson	Male	Educated in the disciplines	Explicitly critical orientation
	Professor Glenn	Male	Educated in the disciplines	–
UK	Professor Rowlings	Male	Educated in the disciplines	–
	Professor Webster	Male	Educated in business school	Explicitly critical orientation
	Professor Kramer	Male	Educated in the disciplines	Explicitly critical orientation
	Professor Turner	Female	Educated in the disciplines	–
	Professor Peters	Male	Educated in the disciplines	Explicitly policy-oriented
	Professor Frazer	Male	Educated in business school	Explicitly critical orientation
Continental Europe	Professor Carson	Female	Educated in the disciplines	–
	Professor Gordon	Male	Educated in the disciplines	–