

BECOMING MR ETHICAL - NOTES ON THE
REFLEXIVE STUDY OF ETHICS AND ORGANISING

Christian Toennesen
James Martin Institute for Science and Civilization
Saïd Business School
Oxford University
Park End Street
OX1 1HP
UK

Phone +44 796 2426282

Email christian.toennesen@sbs.ox.ac.uk

Working paper, please do not quote or reference without prior consultation.

Paper to be presented at Subtheme 19 "Reflexivity in Organizational Research" of the
23rd EGOS Colloquium 2007, Vienna

Abstract

Ethics is, without a doubt, in fashion: I can dress ‘ethically’, I can shop ‘ethically’, I can bring up my kids ‘ethically’, I can travel ‘ethically’, I can bank ‘ethically’, and I can choose to work ‘ethically’. Despite these developments we lack finely grained accounts, which aim to add specificity to contemporary ‘ethical’ practices in modern organisations. In line with tentative attempts to theorise ethics as practice, the paper puts forward the analytic notion of ‘ethicising’ as a way of understanding organising and ‘ethics’ under the same rubric. Informed by empirical studies in two explicitly ‘ethical’ companies, the second part of the paper takes as its subject the practices of organisations and researchers ‘becoming’ ‘ethical’. Namely, it, examines how qualitative analyses may be brought to bear on playful research strategies, and in turn what these may have to offer to contemporary debates over reflexivity within organisation studies.

The Hyper Ethical Society

Ethics, as an explicit denominator, has emerged on the agenda in a vast number of domains. In the year 2007 we encounter the prescriptive label of ‘ethics’¹ in most contexts of our daily lives, as professionals, travellers, consumers, employers, parents, politicians, patients, students. The range of actions which is possibly deemed ‘(un)ethical’ is extensive and stretches far beyond the confines of ‘formal’ arrangements and institutional responsibilities. To name but a few, I can dress ‘ethically’ (ethics is in *Vogue*, quite literally), I can go to my local green grocer and buy ‘ethical’ cola alongside ‘ethically sourced’ vegetables and groceries, I can bring up my kids ‘ethically’², visit ‘ethical’ tourist destinations and go there by ‘ethical’ means of transportation³, I can bank ‘ethically’ (and ‘ethical’ investments are supposedly rocketing⁴), I can consult online and offline service providers in order to obtain information on how to make the ‘right’ choices⁵, and I can browse ‘ethical’ news⁶. So to speak, faced with an increasing amount of explicitly (un-)‘ethical’ choices, I can choose to be ‘ethical’ through everyday practice and my ‘responsibility’ for doing so is increasingly rendered visible, articulated, calculated.

¹ I shall refer to ‘ethics’ in inverted commas throughout this paper, unless the term is provided in the literatures or by the actors under study. ‘Ethics’ refers to practices and objects which in one way or the other come with this explicit label, however, I make no attempts to discuss whether this is actually the case. The rationale behind this decision shall be made apparent as the writing unfolds.

² A recent UK example is BabyGROE (Green, Recycled, Organic and Ethical), a charity and a magazine given to pregnant women by their midwife, aiming to guide parents in “realistically incorporating GROE choices into an every day modern lifestyle” (from <http://www.babygroe.co.uk/>).

³ Earthscan (earthscan.co.uk/books), for example, recently published *The Ethical Travel Guide*, listing destinations in 60 countries and allegedly based on 15 years of research.

⁴ E.g. The Dow Jones STOXX Sustainability and FTSE 4 Good indices. Also, institutional investors are increasingly investing “socially responsibly” (the so-called SRI approach), as required by the 2000 Pensions Act

(<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/business.cfm?id=641042005>). Set up in 1983, the Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS) is one of the best known third-party institutions in the UK, offering a broad range of services for companies and private investors.

⁵ Recent years have given rise to a myriad of ethical investment groups; The Ethical Investors Research Group maintains a directory containing more than 50 UK-based ethical funds. Consumers can find ‘ethical guidance’ on specific products, which are ranked by “ethiscore” at <http://www.ethiscore.org/>.

⁶ For example <http://www.globalethicsmonitor.com/>, a news aggregator run by AFX and Agence France-Presse (AFP).

New forms of ethical agency

‘Ethics’ is increasingly referred to when defining and legitimising agency in the areas of production, consumption and management, if not living (Sheller 2005; Harrison, Newholm and Shaw 2005). Rose and Novas argue that ethics has become “both a marketable commodity and a service industry in its own right” (2005: 457).

In the context of business, we witness these developments in the formation of ‘ethical’ ‘authorities,’ specialised vocabularies and expertise, bureaucratic systems and management technologies, as exemplified by the rise of ‘applied ethics’ and not least the category of ‘ethicists’ (Jones 2003). Organisations have taken up ‘ethics’ widely, e.g. as witnessed in the dramatic increase in companies adopting ‘ethical codes’ (Stevens 1994) and the rise of ‘ethical consulting’ (Guerrette 1988). Flourishing initially in the 1970s and gaining new momentum in the late 1980s and early 1990s, according to Owen et al. (2000), social and ethical auditing have increasingly spread from the domain of ‘value-based’ organisations, e.g. Body Shop, Traidcraft, and the Co-operative Bank, to that of more mainstream commercial businesses, e.g. Shell and Vodafone. All the ‘Big (-Five turned)⁷ Four’, the world’s biggest accountancy and audit firms for publicly traded corporations, have initiated ‘ethics’ programmes and implemented various ‘ethical’ guidelines for internal and external purposes. In addition, a vast jungle of smaller companies offer a correspondingly diverse number of services, such as the Ethical Company Organisation⁸, which claims to run “the UK’s leading Ethical Company accreditation scheme”; the Fair Labor Association, which makes public lists of worldwide suppliers for a range of companies with global operations; and the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO), which has expanded its franchise to encompass social audits (ISO 26000). Furthermore, ‘green’ or environmental auditing is a major activity, locally and internationally, privately and in the public sector (Cahill 1996; Humphrey and Hadley 2000).

⁷ Following the scandalous bankruptcy of the energy firm Enron in 2002, Arthur Andersen, at that time employing about 90.000 people, was convicted on obstruction of justice charges related to its audits, i.e. shredding tonnes of documents and destroying e-mails. It collapsed and is now a mere shell, dealing with remaining legal issues (See: “The Supreme Court’s quashing of the accounting firm’s conviction sends an important signal”, *Economist*; 6/4/2005, Vol. 375 Issue 8429, p15, 2/3p.)

⁸ <http://www.ethical-company-organisation.org/>

Not surprisingly then, ‘ethics’ is now flourishing within academia, both as a subject of study – consult, for example, this list of scholarly journals and their inaugural issue⁹ – and in the form of guides and codes, for example, in connection with any sort of research involving human or animal subjects. Despite the intertwined nature of contemporary ‘ethics’ and the Academy, this paper makes the case that the social sciences, namely organisation & management studies, sociology, and anthropology, remain severely restricted in their scope of analysis and empirical involvement with this burgeoning enthusiasm for that which is ‘(un)ethical’. By visiting a number of relevant literatures, this claim shall be elaborated upon in the next section.

A review of existing literatures on ethics and organisation

As organisation scholars how are we to make sense of this seemingly extraordinary explosion of interest in and concern with ‘ethics’? What sustains the activities and relationships associated with ‘ethics’? – How, in short, do organisations practice ‘ethics’? In order to address these questions, the following section offers a critical account of the ways in which the social sciences have engaged with the heterogeneous concept of ‘ethics’ up until now.

Despite wide recognition that anthropology is now a legitimate field of enquiry beyond the confines of engagement with the ‘primitive’ (Hine 2001), as witnessed in the detailed descriptions of the sites of production and use of technologies (Thomas 1994; Suchman 1987; Suchman et al. 2002; Suchman 2005, Orlikowski 2000),

⁹ Ethics and Information Technology (March 1999), Science and Engineering Ethics (1995), The Journal of Ethics (March 1997), Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics, Professional Ethics (Spring 1992), Ethics And The Environment (Spring 1996), Environmental Ethics (Spring 1979), Ethics, Place and Environment (1998), Business Ethics, A European Review (January 1992), Business Ethics Quarterly (Jan. 1991), Journal of Business Ethics (Feb.1982), Business & Professional Ethics Journal (Fall 1981), Criminal Justice Ethics (Winter/Spring 1982), Ethics: An International Journal of Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy Journals Division (Oct. 1982), The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics (Fall 1987), Yale Journal Of Health Policy, Law and Ethics (2001), The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics (?),Hastings Center Report (1969), The Journal of Clinical Ethics (Spring 1990), Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal (1991), Bioethics, Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics (1992), Journal of Medical Ethics (1975), Nursing Ethics (March 1994), Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy (1984), Journal of Mass Media Ethics (Fall/Winter 1986), Ethics & International Affairs (1987), Teaching Ethics (March 2001),

laboratories (Latour and Woolgar: 1979 [1986]; Knorr-Cetina 1981; Lynch 1985 and Traweek 1988), and organisation scholars studying ‘upwards’ (Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Doolin 2003; Czarniawska 2004; Law 1994; Woolgar 1991), we lack finely grained accounts which aim to add specificity to contemporary ‘ethical’ practices in modern organisations. The links between ethics and anthropology, Laidlaw (2002) suggests, are undeveloped with hitherto little evidence of ethnographic or theoretical interest¹⁰.

The edited volume by Howell (1997), *The Ethnography of Moralities*, discusses how ethical knowledges/moralities are constituted, enforced and fundamental to notions of personhood and self. The collection does so with reference to ethnographic and text-based historical studies among indigenous people across a wide geographical and analytical spectrum. These range from the moral aspects of gossiping about outsiders in a village in rural England (Rapport 1997), over studies of moral beliefs in the context of Argentinean football, more specifically the difficult balance between winning and delivering an aesthetically pleasing performance (Archetti 1997), to a quest into the foundation for Christian moral values of marriage and sexuality via an analysis of Eve’s role in the Fall (Evens 1997). A common theme linking these disparate stories is the way in which moralities and cultural norms are tied up to particular places, instances and discursive practices. However, despite being rich in empirical examples, it tells us little about ‘ethics’ in explicitly ‘ethical’ organisations. We are thus left to wish for similar studies of contemporary corporate practice in Western societies.

¹⁰ “[...] our discipline [anthropology] has not developed a body of theoretical reflection on the nature of ethics [...] I have said that there is no anthropology of ethics, and I am aware that viewed in a certain light this may seem controversial. I do not mean of course that no anthropologists have ever written about morality. What I mean is that there is no sustained field of enquiry and debate. There is no connected history we can tell ourselves about the study of morality in anthropology, as we do for a range of topics such as kinship, the economy, the state, or the body. There is no history, that is to say, that includes debates on specific interpretive problems, or distinctive concepts contributed by particular authors or schools, or which reflects changes in general theoretical orientation, as one ‘ism’ gives way to the next. There are no equivalents of descent theory and alliance theory, no formalism and substantivism, no instrumentalism and primordialism, no symbolist and phenomenological approaches.[...], it might seem at first sight surprising that an anthropology of morality does not stand at the centre of the discipline (and at the core of every undergraduate course)” (Laidlaw 2002: 311-312).

We do find other studies with an ethnographic interest vested in contemporary organising and morality. Gioia (1992), for example, although far from being an ethnographer, delivers an insider's account of one of the most heavily reported corporate scandals of our time, the infamous Pinto fire case, in which Ford did not withdraw from the market a car with 'proved' fire hazards. He suggests that organisational members construct schemas or scripts, structures guiding cognition and action of individuals, and act 'blindly' upon these when dealing with routine tasks. Following this line of argument, 'breakdowns' may arise when individuals encounter 'ethical' domains that cannot be handled within the existing scripts. Gioia's (1992) solution to this problem is to train people's ability to revise their scripts by exposing them to "script-breaking" in the shape of training scenarios and role-playing. In Gioia's view (1992), handling 'ethical' problems is thus about building up a repertoire of actions in response to the encounter with "ethical domains". Curiously enough, he thus assumes that such domains exist beyond our conception and framing of them – 'appropriate' ethical behaviour becomes a matter of recognition – in which case our understanding of how that which is 'ethical' acquires that very status remains unexplored.

Watson in turn addresses ethics and morality in a participant ethnographic mode, delivering detailed accounts of everyday managerial work (1998). In doing so, he makes a number of useful points. For example, in contrast to Jackall (1988), who claims that discussions over ethics occur rarely among managers unless triggered by ethicists, he demonstrates that such talks do occur and that these are both "sophisticated and heartfelt" (Watson 1998: 260). In addition, Watson disputes Jackall's argument that managers tend to 'bracket off' their personal moral concerns when at work (Ibid). Whereas Watson's works recognise and describe moralities as social constructs – or in his words "guidelines for human action which people acting socially have devised to handle the problems of their existence in a contingent world" (Watson 1998: 267), his point of analysis seems restricted to the role and work of managers. Arguably, this mode of inquiry does not do full justice to a study of 'ethics' in which managers are considered one among many actors shaping everyday organisational realities.

In contrast, other scholars have attempted to go beyond the single case in order to provide more inclusive understandings of the recursive nature of the sites in which ethical ‘difficulties’ arise, for instance through the notion of “regimes of living” (Collier and Lakoff 2005). “Regimes of living” denote moral reasoning in situated configurations, thus serving as a tool with which to map the local alignments of normative, technical and political elements in contexts of ethical problematisation. Regimes of living and “problematic situation[s]” are seen as co-constituting each other in a recursive relationship. Namely, “on the one hand, regimes of living give problematic situations a certain moral or ethical structure for a particular, ethical subject. On the other, a regime of living assumes concrete, substantive form only in relation to the exigencies of a given situation, and may even be reshaped or reworked in a given situation” (Collier and Lakoff 2005: 32).

The edited volume by Ong and Collier (2005) contains many anthropological studies of the invocation of such regimes. For instance, Franklin conceives of stem cells as emergent life forms that reconfigure traditional understandings of economy, governance, and biology on a global level. Hence, she refers to them as a “global biological” (2005: 59-60). Rose and Novas (2005) provide an account of the recursive emergence of biological citizenship, which take up forms beyond racial and national domains, whereas Bowker (2005) writes about the problems of collapsing multiple registers into a single currency in the context of accounting for biodiversity. Ethics thus takes on global forms, Strathern (2005) suggests; ‘ethical regimes’ may even compete with other forms for achieving ‘global’ status.

Although the concept of ‘regimes of living’ provides valuable insight into the many interacting elements which constitute an ‘ethical’ problem or practice, it approaches ‘ethics’ with an explicit focus on ‘global forms’, thereby highlighting rather vague socio-technical configurations rather than arguably distinct entities such as organisations or companies. In practical and analytical terms, the latter presents itself as more amenable to research with an empirical dimension.

In more mundane terms, studying ‘ethics’ in practice appears more workable with regards to working/’visiting’ hours, travel budgets, and access issues within a more or less bounded setting rather than a mere concept like ‘biodiversity’ or ‘biological citizenship’. Furthermore and related, none of the studies above depart from the level of practice. Instead they rely on written and otherwise distanced accounts of what is ‘going on’. As we shall explore later, engaging in the everyday practices of organising ‘ethics’ may yield completely different insights.

Shortcomings in existing literatures on ethics

Having gone through a number of scholarly attempts to conceptualise ‘ethics’, we can proceed to formulate a number of shortcomings that seem to characterise the field more generally, bearing in mind that this is a rough caricature. Firstly, a limited empirical interest in the rise of applied ethics combined with a strong normative agenda appears to dominate. As noted by Harbers et al.: “[w]hat is required instead [rather than well argued judgments] is *involved* description: ethnographic work that looks for contrasts, sets up differences and seeks for what one practice might learn from another” (2002: 219). Ethicists and large parts of the business ethics literature seem concerned with enhancing, improving or reaching ‘better’ ‘ethics’ through regulation, prescription or judgment rather than trying to understand how practitioners themselves make sense of the term. Furthermore, the label of something being ‘(un)ethical’ is, with no or few exceptions, provided by the ‘observer’, be it management researchers, ethnographers, moral philosophers or ethicists, and not by the actors under study. Contemporary analyses of ‘ethics’ have neither been brought to bear on reflexivity, ‘anthropological strangeness’¹¹ nor ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973). Finally, there is a certain ‘sensationalism’ associated with scholarly work on ‘ethics’, whereby it becomes entangled with tales of catastrophe, high-level scandals (as a rule of thumb, always told retrospectively), and ‘sexy’ technologies, e.g. with the prefix bio or nano.

¹¹ A key concept in ethnographic analyses that refers to the deliberate suspension of taken-for-granted cultural beliefs, which can help generate unusual insights.

Addressing the limitations outlined above, the second part of this paper takes as its aim to a) develop a theoretical and methodological position towards a reflexive understanding of ethics as practice and b) to offer empirical insight into the observer realities and strategies of putting this agenda to use.

Towards an understanding of ethics as practice: Ethicising

In attempting to steer away from ‘ethics’ as a normative and/or an abstract category, there are a number of concepts originating from organisation studies that may help us to develop empirically informed understandings. One such key concept, which has proliferated in organisation and management studies (Anderson 2006), is Karl Weick’s theory of ‘organizing’, originally developed in the book, ‘The Social Psychology of Organizing’ (Weick 1979). Noting that “Weick has changed the conversation about the way we think, talk and act in organizations” (Sutcliffe et al. 2006: 1576), the concepts put forth in this seminal book are multifold and complex. However, we shall elaborate briefly on just a few.

In contrast to functionalist modes of studying organisations as frames or structures in which social interaction takes place, organizing highlights organisations as subjective, ongoing accomplishments. In this view, as Weick himself has later commented, “People make sense, try to introduce order, and then selectively single out manageable moments from a vast undifferentiated background. When people ‘introduce’ ‘order’, there is no guarantee that it will persist” (Weick 2006: 1724). Hence, order emerges as a transient phenomenon that must be re-accomplished repeatedly. Linked to this argument is also the proposition that organisational members do not simply respond to a world ‘out there’, rather they actively create the environment that restrains them. In Weick’s words: “Enacting involves shaping the world (e.g. a self-fulfilling prophecy verifies itself) as well as stirring the world so that it yields what we then treat as ‘answers’” (Weick 2006: 1729).

Similarly, in contrast to business ethics literatures seeking to optimise ‘ethical’ behaviour as a rational project (c.f. Moberg and Seabright 2000), Phillips (1992) states that business ethics must be based on a reflexive understanding of

organisational practice in ways that foreground the social reality in which decisions are made. In this ethnomethodological view, it thus becomes irrelevant to pass a conclusion on what is 'right'/'wrong', 'ethical'/'unethical', rather the concern is with how meaningfulness and sensibility are enacted among the organisational members, i.e. 'ethics' as an ongoing, contextual accomplishment and sense-making device.

Clegg et al. (2006) provide further backing for such a research agenda, arguing for an ethics in practice approach that "asks what people actually do when they engage with ethics at work", i.e. "an examination of how ethics are differentially embedded in practices that operate in an active and contextualized manner" (2006: 4-5). Whereas Phillips (1992) calls for organisation scholars and ethicists to study ethics as participant observers, Clegg et al. note that such a perspective would enable "[...] innovative directions in both research and practice [...]" (2006: 13). That is what this paper aims to do.

Consequently, in developing an understanding of ethics in action, it might be useful to rethink 'ethics', not as an abstract category that is self-evident or imposed by nature, but an inherently social sense-making device that performs particular orders. Hence, inspired by the theories and epistemological standpoints outlined above, a fruitful strategy would be to change the nexus of analysis from that of 'ethics' to 'ethicising'.

Studying organisations through the lens of 'ethicising', this paper suggests, comes with the assumption that 'ethics' is simultaneously a process and an outcome; it is never achieved once and for all but always in the making.¹² Organisational members actively construct the realities in which 'ethical' problems and solutions are rendered visible and workable. 'Ethicising' thus merges the study of organisations and 'ethics' under one category, thereby emphasising the belief that moral order is not, epistemologically and practically, distinct from everyday tasks. In other words, looking at 'ethicising' rather than 'ethics' allows us to ask fundamentally different questions. Instead of discussing and arriving at abstract definitions of what is

¹² Other social researchers have promoted similar shifts; Law (1994) coined the term "modes of ordering" in lieu of 'order' and Whittington (2003) has examined strategy as practice under the rubric of "strategizing".

‘ethical’, what is ‘good’, etc., a skill mastered by moral philosophers, ‘ethicising’ prompts us to look at the mechanisms by which organisations render things and practices ‘(un)ethical’.

The approach is consistent with what has been characterised as the turn to practice in the social sciences (Schatzki et al. 2001). The turn to practice comes with the assumption that practice creates its own rules in each instance of its use, favours verbs over nouns, focuses on relationships rather than attributes and employs performative definitions (Czarniawska, 2001: 256). Simply put, the understanding of things depends on their use. We shall now briefly delve into the research design inspired by these conceptual pointers before looking into the practices of becoming in the world of everyday ‘ethics’.

Research design

The agenda above prompts us to ask how we can go about designing research in a way that highlights ‘ethics’ as a practical *métier*, in response to which three methodological departure points shall now be introduced: Participant observation/interviews in three explicitly ‘ethical’ yet vastly different companies, thereby allowing for attached, explorative studies of ‘ethics’. Secondly, ‘natural definitions’, i.e. entering the organisation and relying upon the actors’ sense-making categories rather than preconceived notions of what is ‘(un)ethical’. Thirdly, mobilising material sensibilities, primarily developed within STS literatures, by studying the social *and* material fabric of ‘ethicising’. In addition to these somewhat general guidelines the analysis has been brought to bear on three distinct yet overlapping moments of organisational life: *Legitimacy*; what sustains legitimate membership for members of an ‘ethical’ organisation; *accountability mechanisms*, what are the systems in place, formal and informal, that render ‘ethicality’ durable and measurable; and lastly, *the making of ‘unethics’*, how do organisational members legitimise their own “socio-ethical domain” by contrasting and comparing it to “disreputable others”, a line of inquiry inspired by Michael and Birke (1994). In short, the study sets out to look for differences in the ways organisations practice ‘ethics’.

Empirical sites

The experiences reported on in the following section stem from a total of 10 months of participant observation in a property company, The Property Company, and a corporate social responsibility (CSR) consultancy, The Consultancy¹³. What follows is a brief introduction to each of the companies, which have been anonymised as part of a non-disclosure agreement.

The Property Company (PC) is a business based in a university town specialising in developing and maintaining ‘ethical properties’, i.e. acquiring run down buildings, often in deprived areas, refurbishing them according to highly specific environmental and social standards, and letting them out to ‘ethically’ screened tenants at a rate below the market price. It employs some 12 people, of whom half work in the Oxford head office. As part of the company’s ‘commitment’ approach, directors and senior staff members are expected to accept lower wages than would be the case in similar private sector companies. The company has some 130 tenants, ranging from NGOs promoting slam poetry, through Swahili support groups, to Green Party offices, spread across 12 properties in the UK. Though the company aims to foster “social change”, which is reflected in its choice of tenants, nevertheless, it operates according to market principles, i.e. it is a PLC, and has performed successfully over the past 5 years. I joined the Property Company in January 2006, working part time on developing an “ethical supply chain” for 6 months. All employees were informed about my dual role as a researcher and a co-worker.

The Consultancy is of a similar size in terms of employees, and prides itself in being “independent” given that all of the employees are also partners (owners). The company specialises in corporate responsibility (CR), i.e. it advises its clients “on the full range of social, environmental and ethical matters”, such as “sustainability”, “climate change”, “non-financial reporting”, “business ethics” and “ethical trading”. The company’s main office is in London but it has staff across the UK. In addition, the Consultancy sells itself on a policy of creating long term relationships with its clients, adopting a “business approach” to CR, being “honest”, and having a strong

¹³ The research includes an additional empirical leg, an oil company, the analysis of which has been left out of this paper since it is work in progress.

preference for “evidence, analysis, and data.” I joined the company in November 2006 and was allocated a number of projects pertaining, among other things, to ranking social reporting practices in the media sector, producing a report on ‘ethical’ issues in the pharmaceutical sector, and a various forms of research assistance.

In both cases, prior to joining, I was keen to emphasise that my intentions were never to assess whether the organisation was ‘actually’ ‘(un)ethical’. Rather the object of study was the differences in ‘ethical’ work cultures, and the reward was my free labour. In addition to the observation studies, the analysis encompassed interviews and document analyses. Having outlined the notion of ethicising and given an introduction to the empirical sites, we shall now briefly assess some current writings on reflexivity within science & technology studies (STS) and organisation studies. Subsequently, we shall explore how reflexivity can be nurtured in the process of becoming ‘ethical’ and what this means in practice.

Fluid reflexivity

Following the surge in early ‘radical reflexivity’ within STS (Ashmore 1989; Woolgar 1988), Pollner (1991) famously asserted that reflexivity had “settled down and moved out to the suburbs”. On a similar note, we could and should ask whether reflexivity has now turned “into safe formulae for the routine promulgation of empirical case studies”? (Woolgar 2004: 344).

Indeed, reflexivity, in several cases versions that draw on STS sensitivities, features prominently on the scene of management and organisation studies (see for example Hardy et al. (2001) and Calas & Smircich (1999)). Chia (1996) has called into question the way organisation scholars unproblematically assert the primacy of notions such as ‘the organisation’, its ‘goals’, ‘environment’, ‘strategies’, etc. as legitimate objects of study. He suggests instead a study mode of ‘becoming realism’ in which attention is paid to the practices of *generating* stabilised effects such as the ones mentioned above. Whereas Law would probably disagree on the wording, namely the notion of ‘realism’, he advocates a similar agenda for qualitative researchers, i.e. focus on process rather than outcome, more generous definitions of

what count as method, recognition of fractional and multiple realities, reflexivity as a central concern, and lastly appreciation of indefiniteness as a legitimate concept, not as a sign of methodological failure (2004: 150-154).

Although reflexivity has emerged as an important component of doing research, granting it an academic life of its own may be problematic. As Molloy (1999) points out, turning reflexivity into a standalone theoretical project seems doomed to fail due to its inherent scepticism towards overarching epistemological and ontological claims. He notes how writers such as Michael (1996) and Haraway (1997) have argued that every time we attempt to deconstruct a field of knowledge the effect is to simultaneously reinforce the ‘reality’ of reflexivity thereby adding to its rigidity.

With these comments in mind how are we to write, conceive of, and promote reflexivity? Law’s answer would perhaps be somewhere along the lines of a programme of “modest sociologies” (1994). Modest sociologies are incomplete and non-reductionist, aware of the context of their production, make claims limited in scope, are concerned with social interaction, are empirically grounded, tend to be symmetrical in their mode of investigation, avoid starting with strong assumptions about their subject-matters, and co-exist with other sociologies (cf. Gerson 1995). However sympathetic these claims may be, it seems paradoxical that this label has to be written and advertised, i.e. is it modest to draw attention to the principle that you or your work are supposedly of a modest nature, let alone come up with a ‘modesty checklist’?

There remains, then, a tension with how to define, refine and foster reflexivity without turning it into yet another obligatory passage point (Callon 1986). Perhaps this tension could be seen as a resource similar to the “fluidity” of the Zimbabwe bush pump, as propagated by de Laet and Mol (2000). Namely, the bush pump is a much celebrated technology because it takes on several identities, whether as a mechanical object, hydraulic system, hygienic agent, or community-building device with constantly oscillating boundaries; the different identities of the pump are always contextually performed; and lastly, not only are the identities and their usefulness subject to change, but so are the criteria by which they are assessed.

If we were to conceive of reflexivity as an artefact within a similar ontological construction, it becomes clear that nailing down 'its' properties is at best an unrewarding task. Instead, we might proceed not by saying what reflexivity is, but rather attempt to come up with a set of metaphors or notions that we would like reflexive research to aspire to; the key objectives being to inspire and enable rather than limit or restrict the scope and ability of our scholarly engagements. The concept we shall explore here is 'playful' research, and the objective is to create surprising knowledge without sacrificing rigour. On the backdrop of ethicising, how to convert these concerns into practice is the topic of the remainder of this paper.

'Ethical' becoming

What follows is a set of tales and methodological strategies that relate to the playful study of companies which find themselves in a constant state of becoming 'ethical'. By emphasising the role of 'ethics' as a sense-making device, we study not only this process as it unfolds 'out there' but also the 'ethical' becoming of the observer and the interrelation between the two. This paper proposes to manage this relationship with 'open eyes', not as a passive act of taking the colour of the surroundings, going native, but rather for researchers to engage, challenge, and tinker with own beliefs as well as those held by the organisational members. Rather than 'letting this happen', i.e. considering it a trivial affair, the paper reflects upon a range practical strategies for teasing out 'ethical' responses and blurring the boundaries between the observer and those observed.

As an introduction to this proposition, here is a reflection on the process of becoming Mr Ethical. The question is this: what are the changes that occur in the two-and-a-half years from the initial phases of defining a researchable topic for the doctorate – doing something with 'ethics' – to the current stage, where most of the fieldwork has been undertaken, the questions set and the interpretive flexibility regarding the outcome dramatically reduced?

Naturally, what is referred to here is a gradual transition that gains momentum when friends start referring to you as 'Mr Ethical' or the 'Ethical Oracle' (jokingly, of

course), when family members pull you aside at social events in order to ask you a question about ‘ethics’, be it about the acquisition of garden furniture or recent political scandals; when random conversations end with the question ‘what do you think, is that ethical?’; when peers point you towards issues that should be ‘exposed’ because ‘organisation x is clearly not ethical!’; when your inbox is full of invitations to join panels, seminars or working groups on ‘ethics’; when the walk home from the pub turns into an ‘ethical’ discussion; or when you realise that your name comes up high on Google when performing ‘ethics’-related searches. To begin with you blush or shy away from delivering value judgments, however, as time progresses, you become adept in delivering answers that sound credible; you use particular phrases and ‘scientific’ wordings that provide your statements with what is apparently credibility, integrity and some form of consistency. And the loop goes on.

Gradually you do find yourself quite knowledgeable, perhaps even daring, when it comes to ‘ethical’ issues: it becomes almost an instinctive reaction to read any article, listen – I did not say eavesdrop – extra carefully to any adjacent conversation or radio show, and watch any TV broadcast that have the word ‘ethics’ in it. You start using the words, facing the same dilemmas and recognising the same problems as those experienced by the tribe members under study; you build up vocabularies and rationales that make sense in different settings, although these may, in theory at least, be irreconcilable; you know the difference between deontological and utilitarian schools of ethics; you remember the dictionary definition of ethics and moral(s) by heart; you have an informed opinion about the leading academic ethics journals; you become fluent in the most urgent ‘ethical’ issues pertaining to businesses, technology and the environment; you find yourself on mailing lists and in the same networks as other ‘experts’; you start (or give up) composting, measuring your carbon footprint and assessing the individual merits of local, organic, and fairtrade produce; you get confused with the ‘real’ tribe members; you write ‘ethics’ on your CV and consider taking up an ‘ethical’ job offer; you become surprised as to how you can no longer remember the details of how you got here. In short, you become Mr Ethical, purveyor of ‘ethical’ expertise since 2004.

An example from my field notes will illustrate how I as a researcher found myself in a very odd position representing the Property Company and thereby automatically

assuming a certain ‘ethical’ authority. The excerpt below describes my encounter with a sales representative, a “corporate account manager”, from a carpet company. The meeting was scheduled as part of my assignment to produce a catalogue of ‘ethical’ materials to aid the property managers in making the ‘right’ decisions:

She made multiple comments about the way she leads her life, at times often apologising to me for breaching ‘the ethical rules’, e.g. driving a car, not doing charity work, or being a “materialist girl”. She told me how she always bought organic stuff, how she travelled to Cambodia and got “the spiritual experience and all that”, and not least what a great guy the owner of Carpet Company is: “just Google him”. All this while I sat back nodded my head and looked serious yet thinking ‘why are you telling me all this?’. She was very enthusiastic about the organisation, having accepted a reduced salary compared to her previous job in order to work for a “good company”. Her flattering comments about the products were often accompanied by some sort of self-introspection mobilising her own ethics as an argument “I know I am a sales person (account manager), but I really believe in the environment.” (field notes 09/05/06)

It is in this process of becoming, neither restricted to the study of carpet sales people nor the broader category of ‘ethics’, that researchers can benefit from adopting a playful approach that breaks with prevalent forms of doing social science. The line of reflexivity that is advanced here is not about leaving room for surprise, it is about *creating* room for surprise. However, creating something usually requires closeness in one form or the other. Indeed, much has been written about qualitative methodology as the counter exemplar of detached research, but how is it possible to lapse such distance in practice? The following section highlights a number of ways in which this can be done.

Playful research in practice

This section touches upon the issue of how to get under the skin of an organisation without necessarily becoming one with it. It took me only a short time to realise that practicing ‘ethics’ in the Property Company comes with a price in terms of sacrifices, commitment and work. This is not least because these are people to whom any decision can possibly be rendered ‘ethical’/‘unethical’ so that every day presents new forms of tension and paradoxes, whether at home or at work. However, this is a cost

that can be ‘alleviated’ when it is ironised or even ridiculed in certain ways. My field notes are rich in such examples, a number of which will be introduced now¹⁴. The first example is an excerpt from my research diary, which underlines how tricky it is to deal with irony being an observer and a newcomer.

I consider myself a somewhat irony savvy person yet I often find myself confused as to whether the tribe members are joking/ironising when they use the word ‘ethical’. For me, and this might be an observer flaw, it seems there is a constant ambience of ambiguity in the ‘ethical’ organising/discourse, perhaps employed in order to deal with the complex abundance of choices along the lines of; if you take it too seriously, it will drive you insane (07/04/06)

My presence as an outsider afforded further ‘joking’, in particular because I adopted humour as a deliberate strategy to question and not least tease out taken-for-granted views and vocabularies, queries that I might otherwise have shied away from in order to avoid moments of unease. For example, given my ethnographic, ‘open card’ methodology, I would not hesitate to refer to the Property Company employees in scientific terms as ‘tribe members’ and speak of their practices as ‘rituals’ and ‘rites of passage’. By doing so, and of course playing the ‘foreigner card’, it became possible for me to ask ‘stupid’ yet revealing questions without necessarily being labeled as an untactful person.

In one instance, I wanted to research the tribe members’ reaction to ‘unethical’ objects, which was difficult due to the fact that everyone would go to great lengths to avoid such collectively sanctioned products. Hence, by walking around the office and offering every member a piece of “unethical” chocolate, I learned a key lesson about the practices that render ‘unethical’ behaviour permissible:

Interesting patterns of behaviour can be observed by bringing the tribe members non-ethical chocolate. I passed by the market and bought a box of chocolates, which I offered to everyone (as a Valentine’s treat). When I said; “I am afraid they are not ethical” the reply would usually be something like “well, I just have to eat them fast then” (Isobel) or “I am only allowed to eat Fair Trade chocolate” [smiling and accepting the chocolate] (Robert).

¹⁴ It should be noted, though, that it poses great challenges to communicate in writing the subtlety with which humour acts as a resource for resolving ‘ethical’ tension.

Conversely, the strategy would backfire in the sense that my slightly cheeky approach to creating knowledge would be reversed; the tribe members would use humour ‘against’ me in rather instrumental – and indeed funny – ways, for example, by using my own ‘scientific’ expressions to lure me into doing repetitive or trivial work:

Isobel asked me whether I would like to get engaged in some “ethics in practice”, which, given the tribe members expectations of me, I could hardly say no to. It turned out that I was supposed to help her carry a pile of cardboard down to the boot of her car for recycling. This little episode caused a lot of laughter among the tribe members (field notes 08/02/06).

As I noted back then, clearly the quote underlines the way in which the everyday achievement of ‘ethics’ partners with humour in order to work comfortably with compromises, shortcomings and things that simply do not add up. On a similar note, I was asked whether I would be interested in doing some “ethical stapling” in preparation for the Annual General Meeting (field notes 01/03/06). In other instances, my presence as an observer would be drawn upon in order to address ‘internal’ issues, such as keeping the lights off insofar as possible. This excerpt is again taken from my field notes:

-Claire: [turning on the lights in the dark office] *I think we have taken our environmental consciousness a bit too far—remember to put that in the report, Christian* [laughter]

-Christian: *Well, thanks for reminding me, I almost forgot about it*

-Nikita: *It is just a matter of time before someone sues the company for damage to the eyes* [laughter]

The quote above suggests again that the boundary between ‘ethical’ sacrifices and ‘unethical’ comfort is drawn and negotiated with reference to humour. It also shows that the presence of an ‘observer’ may help members to address tension more openly. Indeed, my presence, and the playful approaches chosen to understand why and how tribe members behave the way they do, seem to have accentuated organisational repertoires that would otherwise have passed unnoticed. The next section delves into how playful research may prove useful in comparative empirical research.

Doing comparative empirical studies largely enables researchers to draw out analytical patterns based on empirical differences, whether working within a qualitative paradigm or using multivariate statistics. Nonetheless, few accounts, if any, exist of the deliberate ‘misplacement’ of artifacts, physical or linguistic, from one organisation under study to another.

In my attempts to show that ‘ethical’ cultures are tied up to particular material arrangements, often surprisingly mundane, I took a device, a so-called wormery, that was pivotal in the everyday culture of the Property Company tribe and threw it into the discourse of the Consultancy. The device, a green plastic barrel full of worms, served the job, at least it was intended to do so, of converting kitchen waste into compost. As argued elsewhere, it served another important role as a community-building device, for example, by playing a lead role in an organisational narrative about being different (Toennesen 2007). When calls were made, by email, for suggestions on how the Consultancy could become better at “walking the [ethical/environmental] talk and “taking some of our own medicine”, I included a wormery among my list of suggestions. I did so mainly to study the reactions of the other employees, as it did not seem straightforwardly compatible with the existing rather exclusive office environment. Not surprisingly, a few minutes later the person responsible for collecting the suggestions circulated my email to everyone with the following addition:

I have amended the rules of the competition in case you thought the ideas had to be in any way sensible.....! (Email 01/02/07)

Clearly, this is a way of demonstrating that ‘we’ as an organisation would never want such a thing in our office. An additional email, sent two days later, emphasised how completely alien a wormery would be within the context of a high-calibre, London office complex:

Julian has pointed out the slight disadvantages of the wormery (you have to empty some worm wee out and if you don’t they all rot and die and stink. Hey ho! I liked the thought of trying to persuade SH [the property management agency] to put one in the kitchen though!! (Email 03/02/07)

What is striking here is that two explicitly ‘ethical’ organisations with many similarities, e.g. in terms of the number of employees, ‘home’ country, language, age range, recruitment channels¹⁵, shared shibboleths¹⁶, etc., exhibit so vastly different reactions when it comes to a mundane artefact; a complete dismissal versus a warm embrace. Also, we learn that the mechanisms by which practices and artefacts are included in everyday organising can be illuminated differently by adopting a playful approach, for example, by *creating* contrasts rather than merely – and somewhat blue-eyed – (cl)aiming to *describe* organisational phenomena as they unfold ‘naturally’.

A second form that playful involvement may take has to do with ‘sharing’ and doing research in networks beyond the immediate empirical site and traditional research settings, such as libraries and offices. The idea of seeing things from other perspectives, e.g. through various lenses of power, language or gender, has been promoted broadly within feminist studies, not least in the notions of partial connections (Strathern 1991) and situated knowledges (Haraway 1988). According to Alvesson and Sköldböck, ‘perspective’ stands at the very core of reflexive research. They conceive of reflexivity as “[...] the very ability to break away from a frame of reference and to look at what it is *not* capable of saying” (Alvesson and Sköldböck 2000: 246) yet their popular textbook is relatively low in pragmatic advice.

For researchers, there are multiple ways to break out of taken for granted assumptions by engaging in discussions using technologies that connect peers across distances and areas of expertise. Three such strategies have been deployed throughout the development of the research reported on here: Regular blog updates, where people can have their say in the comments track; the creation of a Facebook¹⁷ group entitled “We’re ethical, and we know it”, which is open to anyone; and an ‘ethics’ exercise via email. Given that the purpose and outcome of these initiatives are very similar I shall report in detail on the latter activity only. It went like this: I sent a group of 16 people,

¹⁵ The ‘ethical’ industry has its own recruitment channels boasting names such as Ethical Performance and Ethical Corporation.

¹⁶ Tribe members in both organisations frequently deploy a set of rather technical terms and procedures. Examples of such shared notions would be ‘carbon trading schemes’, ‘life-cycle assessments’ and ‘volatile organic compounds’.

¹⁷ Facebook (www.facebook.com) is an online service that lets friends form networks in which they can share pictures, notes and events. At the moment of writing, the site has more than 25 million members worldwide (May 19, 2007).

encompassing friends, colleagues, and family, an email encouraging them to write down their daily encounters with the label of ‘ethics’:

For three days only, would you be so kind and write down every encounter you may have with the word 'ethics' or derivations thereof, whether it occurs in the media or in private conversation. What I need to know is where did you see it, at what time, and in what context? (email excerpt 09/06/06)

The exercise triggered 11 responses of a very varied nature; some were essay-long, elaborate writings whilst others were two-liners; a number of people described events that they themselves found to be (un)ethical, whereas most reports centred on ‘ethics’, as a word or label, experienced in work environments or the media. The settings in which ‘ethics’ were found ranged from speeches in Arabic by Mohammad Quaddafi, over attempts to instil ‘ethics’ in the Danish primary school education system, to the ‘ethical’ aspects of genetic cancer treatments. In the first instance, the survey provided me with different perspectives on how ‘ethics’ is interrelated with the lives of others and thus an opportunity for me to rethink the nature of my empirical foci. Secondly, although this exercise was meant as a one-off event, one year and some 20 emails later, I am still ‘tipped off’ when someone in the ‘panel’ comes across something that he or she reckons would be of interest to me.

Drawing upon these experiences, reflexivity could thus be about rethinking our networks as researchers in order to build up intersubjective accountability mechanisms beyond the confines of the Academy and other already ‘socialised’ actors. This is perhaps similar to the use of what Czarniawska has coined “observant participation”, which she sees as a potential escape route from the “iron cage of research tradition” (2000: 3). In her own research, Czarniawska (2000) asked a group of managers within chosen organisations – and under researchers’ guidance – to systematically collect observations of events for a period of 18 months. No doubt, as Czarniawska claims, this technique addresses the issue of simultaneity and invisibility in organisational life (2000: 16). Nevertheless, for aspiring researchers, who do not hold chairs and boast impressive academic track records, it may not be an option to ask managers and directors for such commitment. Playful research is thus also about inventing ways of engaging that work their way around, or perhaps rather *with*,

seniority, age, gender, etc. Likewise, on a more general note, reflexivity might be brought to bear on re-defining what exactly is meant by an ‘empirical setting’ and lead us towards a view on methods that is not trapped in the dichotomy between abstract philosophy of science, on the one hand, and mere techniques (or the illusion thereof), on the other. With lots of, hopefully, unanswered questions, I shall conclude the paper with a brief set of comments.

Concluding remarks

This paper sets out to expand the vocabulary we as organisational researchers use to think about ways of knowing and seeing. It develops a way of conceiving of ‘ethics’ as practice through the notion of ‘ethicising’. The term highlights the constructive nature of doing ‘ethics’ in contemporary organisations, emphasising not only the co-construction of ‘ethical’ solutions and ‘ethical’ problems, but also ‘ethics’ as a sense-making category and particular material arrangements that are always in the making.

Whilst arguing that reflexivity is an important aspect of organisational research, the paper maintains that attempts to define in detail what exactly the term covers would only add to its rigidity. Instead, it advances the view of reflexivity as a fluid category that finds its use and legitimacy in context. To further promote this stance, the paper puts forward the idea of playful research as a means by which organisation scholars can pursue reflexivity in theory and practice yet preserve its plasticity. Inspired by Nigel Thrift’s accounts of new forms of spatial awareness, we could think of playful research as a form of reflexivity that tinkers with otherness and *re*-positions the subject as an “instrument for seeing” (Thrift 2004: 593).

One way of doing playful research, the paper argues and illustrates, would be for researchers to engage in activities that fiddle with their stereotypical role as either ‘scientists at work’ or ‘flies on the wall’. More specifically, the suggestions run along the lines of adopting humour to tease out organisational repertoires that would otherwise have remained unknown; studying differences in (non)sense-making up front in comparative studies by deliberately ‘misplacing’ tangible artefacts or

linguistic devices from one organisation to another; and lastly expanding the process of doing research by fostering more inclusive understandings of what counts as observation studies, for example, by inviting ‘outsiders’ to have their say in determining the objects – or is it the subjects? – of analysis. What ties these approaches together is an urge to rethink the practices of ‘becoming’ within and with organisations in ways that will yield surprising and, dare I say, playful insights.

Bibliography

- Alvesson, M. and Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive Methodology – New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Anderson, M. (2006). How can we know what we think until we see what we said? A citation and citation context analysis of Karl Wieck's 'The Social Psychology of Organizing'. *Organization Studies*, 27, 11, 1675-1692.
- Ashmore, M. (1989). *The Reflexive Thesis: wrighting sociology of scientific knowledge*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Archetti, E. P. (1997). The moralities of Argentinian Football. *The Ethnography of Moralities*. S. Howell. London, Routledge: 98-123.
- Bowker, G. C. (2005). Time, Money, and Biodiversity. *Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. A. Ong and S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 107-123.
- Cahill, L. B. (1996). *Environmental Audits*, Government Institutes Inc, USA.
- Calas, M. B. and L. Smircich (1999). "Past postmodernism? Reflections and tentative directions." *The Academy of Management Review* 24(4): 649.
- Callon, M. (1986), "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay" in Law, J. (ed), *Power, Action and Belief: A new Sociology of Knowledge?*, Sociological Review Monograph, Routledge, London.
- Callon, M. and Muniesa, F. (2005): "Peripheral Vision: Economic Markets as Calculative Collective Devices," *Organization Studies*. 26, 1229-1250
- Chia, R. (1996). The Problem of Reflexivity in Organizational Research: Towards a Postmodern Science. *Organization* 3: 31-59
- Clegg, S., Kornberger, M. and Rhodes, C. (2006). "Business Ethics as Practice." *British Journal of Management* 17.
- Collier, S. J. and A. Lakoff (2005). On Regimes of Living. *Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. A. Ong and S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 22-39.
- Czarniawska, B. (2001). 'Is it possible to be a constructivist consultant?', *Management Learning*, 32, pp. 253–266.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004). "On Time, Space, and Action Nets." *Organization* 11(6): 773.

- Doolin, B. (2003). "Narratives of change: Discourse, technology and organization." Organization 10(4): 751.
- Dugdale, A. (1999). Materiality: juggling sameness and difference. Actor network theory and after. J. Law and J. Hassard. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 113-135.
- Evens, T. M. S. (1997). Eve: ethics and the feminine principle in the second and third chapters of Genesis. The Ethnography of Moralities. S. Howell. London, Routledge: 203-228.
- Franklin, S. (2005). Stem Cells R Us: Emergent Life Forms and the Biological. Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems. A. Ong and S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 59-78.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books: 3-30.
- Gerson, E.M. (1995): Book review: Organizing Modernity (Law. J), Social Studies of Science (25): 382-388
- Gioia, D. A. (1992). "Pinto Fires and Personal Ethics: A Script Analysis of Missed Opportunities." Journal of Business Ethics 11(5/6): 379-389.
- Guerrette, R. (1988). "Corporate Ethical Consulting: Developing Management Strategies for Corporate Ethics." Journal of Business Ethics 7: 373-380.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995): Ethnography: Principles in Practice. London: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No. 3, 575-599
- Haraway, D. (1997). Modest_Witness, London: Routledge.
- Harbers, H., A. Mol, et al. (2002). "Food Matters: Arguments for an Ethnography of Daily Care." Theory, Culture & Society 19(5/6): 207-226.
- Hardy, C., Phillips, N. and Clegg, S. (2001). "Reflexivity in organization and management theory: A study of the production of the research 'subject'" Human Relations 54(5): 531
- Harrison, R., T. Newholm, et al., Eds. (2005). The Ethical Consumer. London, Sage Publications.
- Heracleous, L. and M. Barrett (2001). "Organizational Change as Discourse: Communicative Actions and Deep Structures in the Context of Information Technology Implementation." Academy of Management Journal 44(4): 755-778.
- Hine, C. (2001). Ethnography in the Laboratory. Inside Organisations: Anthropologists at Work. D. Gellner and E. Hirsch. Oxford, Berg.

- Humphrey, N. and M. Hadley (2000). Environmental Auditing. Isle of Wight, Palladian Law Publishing.
- Jackall, R. (1988) Moral mazes: The world of corporate managers. Oxford University Press.
- Jones, C. (2003). "As if Business Ethics were Possible within Such Limits." Organization 10(2): 223-248.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. (1981), The Manufacture of Knowledge: An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science, Oxford and New York: Pergamon.
- Knorr-Cetina, K. and Preda, A., Eds. (2005) The Sociology of Financial Markets. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laidlaw, J. 2002. For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom. (The Malinowski Memorial Lecture, 2001). Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. 8/2: 311-332.
- Latour, B. and S. Woolgar (1986). Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts, 2nd ed., Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Latour, B. (1992). Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artefacts. Shaping Technology/Building Society: studies in sociotechnical change. W. Bijker and J. Law. Massachusetts, MIT Press.
- Law, J. (1994). Organizing Modernity. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Lynch, M. (1985), Art and Artifact in Laboratory Science: A Study of Shop Work and Shop Talk in a Research Laboratory, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Michael, M. and L. Birke (1994). "Accounting for Animal Experiments: Identity and Disreputable "Others"." Science, Technology, and Human Values 19(2): 189-204.
- Michael, M. (1996). Constructing Identities: The Social, the Nonhuman and Change, London: Sage Publications.
- Moberg, D. J. and M. A. Seabright (2000). "The Development of Moral Imagination." Business Ethics Quarterly 10(4): 845-884.
- Molloy, E. (1999). Management Technologies: Ideas, Practices and Processes, unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University.
- Ong, A. and S. J. Collier, Eds. (2005). Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing.
- Orlikowski, W. J. (2000). "Using Technology and Constituting Structures: A Practice Lens for Studying Technology in Organizations." Organization Science 11(4): 404-428.

Osborne, T. (unpublished paper). Capitalism, Accountability and Ethical Discourse, Bristol University.

Owen, D.L., Swift, T.A., Humphrey, C. and Bowerman, M. (2000) 'The New Social Audits: Accountability, Managerial Capture or the Agenda of Social Champions?' European Accounting Review, 9(1).

Phillips, N. (1992). "Understanding Ethics in Practice: An Ethnomethodological Approach to the Study of Business Ethics." Business Ethics Quarterly 2(2): 223-244.

Pollner, M. (1991). 'Left of ethnomethodology: the rise and decline of radical reflexivity' American Sociological Review, Vol 56(3) 370-80.

Rapport, N. (1997). The morality of locality: on the absolutism of landownership in an English village. The Ethnography of Moralities. S. Howell. London, Routledge: 74-97.

Roberts, J. (2001). "Corporate Governance and the Ethics of Narcissus." Business Ethics Quarterly 11: 109-127.

Roberts, J. (2003). "The Manufacture of Corporate Social Responsibility: Constructing Corporate Sensibility." Organization 10(2): 249-265.

Rose, N. and C. Novas (2005). Biological Citizenship. Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems. A. Ong and S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 439-463.

Schatzki, T., Knorr-Cetina, K. and Savigny, E. (eds.) (2001) The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory, London, Routledge.

Sheller, M. (2005). "The Ethical Banana: markets, migrants, and the globalisation of a fruit". James Martin Institute Visiting Speakers Series: "Globalization in Practice", Said Business School, University of Oxford.

Stevens, B. (1994). "An analysis of corporate ethical code studies: "Where do we go from here?"" Journal of Business Ethics 13(1): 63-69.

Strathern, M. (1991). Partial Connections. Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Strathern, M. (2005). Robust Knowledge and Fragile Structures. Global assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems. A. Ong and S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing: 464-481.

Suchman, L. A. (1987). Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human-Machine Communication. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Suchman, L. A. (2002). "Working Artefacts: Ethnomethods of the prototype." British Journal of Sociology 53(2): 163-179.

- Suchman, L. A. (2002). "Located Accountabilities in Technology Production." Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems 14(2): 91-105.
- Suchman, L. A. (2005). "Affiliative Objects." Organization 12(3): 379-399.
- Sutcliffe, K. M., Brown, A. D., and Putnam, L. L. (2006) Introduction to the Special Issue 'Making Sense of Organizing: in Honor of Karl Weick' Organization Studies 27: 1573-1578.
- Thomas, R. J. (1994). What Machines Can't Do: Politics and Technology in the Industrial Enterprise. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Thrift, N. (2004). "Movement-space: the changing domain of thinking resulting from the development of new kinds of spatial awareness". Economy and Society 33(4): 582-604.
- Traweek, Sharon. 1988. Beamtimes and Lifetimes: The World of High Energy Physicists. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Toennesen (unpublished paper), Wormeries and iPods: The Role of Mundane Artefacts in Ethicising Organisations, Judge Business School Spring Doctoral Conference, Cambridge University, 2007.
- Watson, T.J., (1998), "Ethical Codes and Moral Communities: the Gunlaw temptation, the Simon solution and the David dilemma", in Parker, M. (ed) The Ethics of Organisation, London: Sage
- Weick, K. E. (1979), The Social Psychology of Organizing. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Weick, K. E. (2006) 'Faith, Evidence, and Action: Better Guesses in an Unknowable World' Organization Studies 27: 1723-1736
- Whittington, R. & Melin, L. (2003). "Organizing/Strategizing", in: Pettigrew, A., Whittington, R., Melin, L., Ruigrok, W., Sanchez-Runde, C., & Van den Bosch, F. (Ed.), Innovative Forms of Organizing, Sage, 2003.
- Winner, L. (1985) Do artefacts have politics? Mackenzie, D. and Wajcman, J., eds., The social shaping of technology, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Woolgar, S. (1988). Science: The Very idea. London, Tavistock Publications.
- Woolgar, S. (1991). Configuring the User – the case of usability trials. A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination. J. Law, ed. London, Routledge.
- Woolgar, S. (2004). What happened to provocation in science and technology studies? History of Science and Technology, 20(4): 339-349