The Desire to Rethink Power AND Performativity AND Process

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Abstract
Power AND performativity AND process. Three concepts. Three theoretical perspectives that shape current studies of organizing, of organizations, how they come into existence and how they are maintained. Three distinct trajectories that have already been traced; their separate articulations creating tension, paradox and contradiction. Can we resist existing conceptualizations to create new immanent relations? Can we dissolve the necessity of binary logics, of order, of finality, and embrace simultaneity and multiplicity? In this paper we reimagine the interplay between power and performativity, embracing the role of resistance within the emergent micro-processes of organizational becoming. To do this we take inspiration from the work of Gilles Deleuze.

Keywords
Deleuze, desire, performativity, power, process, resistance

Introduction
Power, performativity and process are recurrent but distinct themes that have all made important contributions to contemporary organization and management theory (OMT). As in many areas of our collective theorizing, OMT has produced discrete concepts that isolate, order and stratify the myriad of interrelated processes through which organizing is achieved. And yet our desire to define and shape the world we inhabit in terms of clear-cut categories inevitably limits our theorizing. Imposing a binary logic of ‘OR’ creates tensions, paradoxes and blind spots that obscure the dynamic, generative and relational micro-processes through which organizations are brought into being.

Taking inspiration from the radical process philosophy of Gilles Deleuze,¹ the aim of this paper is to replace the artificial finalities and the logic of OR by embracing the multiplicities and

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simultaneities so often described in empirical studies of organizational life. Adopting a logic of ‘AND’, we abandon attempts to resolve the contradictions our theorizing creates and provide a more productive alternative. Specifically, by deploying Deleuze’s conception of desire, we dissolve the dialectic of power-resistance and the paradoxes this creates. We show how, driven by their competing desires, an apparently powerless actor’s performative acts both comply (with) AND resist what are imagined as established relations of power. Power is no longer the primary, ephemeral and inescapable force that structures all. It becomes an effect of competing desires.

This dissolving demands a different form of writing. One that avoids simply re-presenting what has gone before. It requires that we try to escape the established rules that constrain our thought; to ask questions, to stutter and stumble, searching for openings and avoiding closure. Deleuze’s writing reflected this. He knowingly hijacked and subverted words, endlessly recombining them to create not a single meaning but a multiplicity of possible interpretations. His writing is a ‘Deleuzoguattarian bestiary of grotesque neologisms and hyper-complex analytical constructions’ (Sørensen, 2005, p. 124) that upends the traditions of scientific writing.

We intend to take the reader on what may be an unfamiliar narrative journey, in which we ask:

What if we reconceive power and performativity as intermingling forces in the dynamic processes of organizational becoming? What new possibilities arise if we view these concepts through a Deleuzian lens? What novel opportunities emerge if we dissolve the dialectic of power-resistance?

To address these questions, we begin by considering the effect of Deleuze’s work on OMT before exploring the limitations of current theories of power and performativity that remain wedded to the logic of OR. Then we infuse the prevailing power-resistance dialectic with Deleuzian desire to dissolve the paradoxes and limitations that it creates. Next, we turn to Deleuze’s often overlooked work on the linguistic mechanics of performative acts, revealing how the performative subject sidesteps the dialectic of resistance OR compliance that traditional theory imposes upon them. Finally, we draw on prior empirical work to show how becoming Deleuzian creates new possibilities that dissolve the power-resistance dialectic and extend the theorizing of both power AND performativity within our community. Our desire is to encourage others to explore the possibility of thinking and writing differently, to embrace multiplicities and simultaneities. To become Deleuzian.

**Lines of Flight: Power AND Performativity AND Process**

AND is neither one thing nor the other, it is always in between, between two things; it’s the borderline, there’s always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we don’t see it, because it’s the least perceptible of things. And yet it’s along this line of flight that things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 45)

Power AND performativity AND process; well-established philosophical perspectives that have been corralled by OMT scholars and put to work in the community’s linguistic performances.

Inspired by the philosophies of James, Bergson and Whitehead, OMT scholars have increasingly embraced process thinking (Langley & Tsoukas, 2017), focusing on the ongoing micro-processes through which actors and organizations come into being (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Similarly, the significance of performativity within management thought is well established. Based on the philosophical work of Austin, infused with the work of post-structural thinkers, and given fresh impetus by feminist writers; it too is an important theoretical lens for OMT scholars. Callon adds an important dimension to performative studies, making OMT scholars aware of the inherent
performativity of their own work and initiating debates about the power of OMT to bring about change (Fleming & Banerjee, 2016). And of course, the topic of power has long been acknowledged within OMT (e.g. Fleming & Spicer, 2014). Driven by an engagement with Foucault, theories of power remain an important focus for many within the community (Costas & Grey, 2014).

OMT scholars have drawn from the philosophical milieu to create three apparently enduring and distinct perspectives. However, in becoming Deleuzian, we visualize these three perspectives as overlapping areas of a larger whole: a dynamic multiplicity of ideas rather than competing concepts. Each one, a vibrant fluxing intensity that emerged on the theoretical surface of OMT, and from which ideas flow and mix, creating new intensities of thought. They become neighbouring nodes within a rhizome, each radiating shoots that spread out in all directions, creating a dense entanglement of ever-changing ideas. There are no clear-cut boundaries. No permanent forms. We cannot unpick the rhizome or abstract one part from its surroundings. Each node is entwined with those around it; a collective mass of thought, constantly folding back into itself and its neighbours, creating new connections that offer the possibility of new forms of theorizing as the rhizome colonizes the space over which it spreads.

Rhizomatic thinking is not new within OMT. Chia (1999) gave the community an early insight into the novel potential of Deleuze’s work. Attempts to embrace Deleuze followed: Bougen and Young (2000), Carter and Jackson (2004), Lawley (2005), Linstead and Thanem (2007), Sørensen (2005), Styhre (2002) and Thanem (2004). Others, like Hjorth (2013), Kristensen and Pedersen (2016) and Pedersen (2008), added to the movement that the Deleuzian pioneers had imagined.

However, unlike his contemporary, Foucault, Deleuze’s work has struggled to gain a significant place within OMT (Pick, 2017). While the OMT community has been pounded by waves of Foucault (Raffnsøe, Mennicken, & Miller, 2019), Deleuze has remained a distant figure. Waving (not, we hope, drowning) in deeper theoretical waters. And yet as the 21st century has progressed, a spate of Deleuzian flavoured work (e.g. Benozzo, Koro-Ljungberg, & Adamo (2019), Hietanen, Andéhn, & Wickström (2020), Johnsen, Olaison, & Sørensen (2018), Mohammed (2019), Pedersen & Kristensen (2019), and Välikangas & Carlsen (2020)) suggests his work is now spreading further across the surface of OMT.

In the mid-20th century Foucault (2016, p.38) enthused about the power of his associate’s work, speculating that ‘one day, perhaps, this century will be known as Deleuzian’. Was Foucault a little premature? Is the Deleuzian epoch now upon us?

Adopting a Deleuzian lens allows us to explore the flow of ideas between OMT’s seemingly isolated rhizomes of thought. Embracing the multiplicities and differences both within and between, can we trace lines of flight within current organizational theorizing? Can we reveal the immanent power of the performative that enables actors to express their desires to both resist and comply?

**Mind the Gap**

Echoing a similar conundrum posed by Deleuze and Guattari (1983) (Why does the subject desire its own repression?), Cabantous, Gond, Harding and Learmonth (2016, p. 210) provocatively ask: ‘How could a political organizational theory of performativity account for the supine academic who talks about action but spurns it on his/her own door-step?’

It is a question that current performative theorizing struggles to address because it is constrained by a particular reading of power heavily influenced by Foucault. This reading presents the prevailing macro-relations of power as the ubiquitous force structuring all social formations; making performative acts largely subservient to established and legitimized authority. Power, as we have come to understand it, produces repetition without difference through disciplinary control, excluding the possibility of meaningful resistance. The power-resistance dialectic conditions the
possibility of resistance to its placement within relations of power, snaring performative theory in a Foucauldian ‘Catch 22’ (Newton, 1998).

To escape (or evade) this trap, theorists portray the workplace as a contested space (Mumby, Thomas, Martí, & Seidl, 2017) where ‘power is never without the potential for resistance’ (Goss, Jones, Betta, & Latham, 2011, p. 226). However, although the possibility of resistance is recognized, theory presents the act of resistance as an ‘occasional alternative’ (Thompson, 2016, p. 117); micro-processes driven by an existential threat to the subject. Resistance becomes a form of pseudo-opposition; decaffeinated resistance (Contu, 2008), trivial transgressions that perpetuate existing relations of power. Performative acts are viewed as carnivalesque, confirming the status of the cynical jester in the court of an oppressive sovereign power. Our theories present the performative actor’s attempts to offer resistance as nothing more than ‘an aesthetic, erotic and voluntaristic desire to act otherwise’ (Caldwell, 2007, p. 21). Contu (2008, p. 372) argues that Foucault’s ‘fantasy of a subject’ cannot provide a meaningful theory of resistance: the resistant’s performative acts simply reinforce their own repression. Theory has switched from a dialectic of power/subject to one of resistance/control (Tweedie & Holley, 2016), but the subject is still trapped within the dialectic, still powerless to resist.

In contrast, McCabe, Ciuik and Gilbert’s (2020, p. 974) empirical work reveals a nuanced form of resistance that pervades organizational spaces and ‘warps, twists, confounds, hides, supports and undermines’ the prevailing, often contradictory, relations of power that exist within organizations. How are we to reconcile the micro and the macro, the empirical and the theoretical? Harding, Ford and Lee (2017) take an important first step, showing that the power to resist can be seized by an agentive subject even though prevailing theories seem to cast them as a passive actor. They offer a performative theory in which ‘resistance and resistants emerge in moment-to-moment co-constitutive moves that may be invoked when identity or self is put in jeopardy’ (Harding et al., 2017, p. 1209; emphasis added). We have a theory that acknowledges the possibility of performative resistance and when it might emerge. But from where does resistance emerge and through what micro-processes is it enacted?

Cabantous et al. (2016, p. 202) highlight the possibility of subversive territorializations and the need to push the limits of speakability in order ‘to challenge prevailing forms of authority’. This begs two further questions.

1. What drives the subject to resist prevailing authority, to become subversive?
2. What does it mean to push the limits of speakability?

From a Deleuzian perspective the answer to the first question is desire. Often overlooked within OMT (Thanem, 2004), when it is considered, the focus is on the subject’s desire for an external object they lack. This orientation maintains (rather than challenges) existing relations of power built on consumption and/or possession. While acknowledging capitalism’s ability to manipulate desire, it overlooks the active, productive and creative force of desire that brings about personal and organizational change. A desire for endless becoming, rather than a desire that only finds a voice when identity is threatened. A political force ‘reject[ing] the institutional authority of whatever existed before’ (Välikangas & Carlsen, 2020, p. 545). Deleuzian desire gives Foucault’s decaffeinated subject the power to resist. Creating a line of flight for theories of power AND performativity, which we will trace presently.

To address the second question, we explore the linguistic micro-processes that create the possibility of performative resistance. Appropriating ideas from Austin, we already accept that we have ways of doing new things with words (Bosma, Chia, & Fouweather, 2016); performative acts bestow words with power, changing the social world they relate to (e.g. Gross & Zilber (2020), and
Schildt, Mantere, & Cornelissen (2020)), Wickert and Schaefer (2015, p. 124) draw attention to a form of *progressive performativity* in which ‘language is used as a vehicle for micro-emancipation, reflexivity and change’. Harding et al. (2017) also show that resistance with words is possible and that it happens in subtle and complex dramas. Cooren (2008) uses the same imagery, suggesting that the drama unfolds in the space between the semiotic and pragmatic aspects of language. And yet despite this, there remains a lacuna (Lockwood, Giorgi, & Glynn, 2019, p. 8) in our theorizing; we cannot explain how it is possible to do things with words that escape or evade existing relations of power. Sergi, Lusiani, Langley and Denis’s (2013) study of performative dynamics begins to address this, but it does not reveal the pragmatic, contextual and relational aspects of language needed to extend our theories of performativity. What are the forces that are enacted and interpreted in and by language (Lecercle, 2002, p. 167)? Just how is it possible to use words to resist and subvert prevailing discourses?

Deleuze’s work on language offers another line of flight to address this second question; but first we return to desire and the prevailing power-resistance dialectic, which we explore through the intermingling of ideas in the works of Foucault and Deleuze.

**Foucault AND Deleuze**

Carter (2008) charts how the Foucauldian rhizome took root and spread across the surface of OMT. Despite Foucault’s own assertion that it was ‘an indecipherable, disorganized muddle’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 80), others have sought to untangle Foucault’s vast canon. Välikangas and Seeck (2011) are among many who identify a common theme running through his work: the *subject* and *power*.

In contrast, Raffnsøe et al. (2019) take a Deleuzian approach. Rather than attempting to capture the essence of Foucault they avoid representation and explore his effect on OMT. Like theirs, our desire is to move beyond tired Foucauldian flavoured dichotomies that ‘still hamper organization studies’ (Raffnsøe et al., 2019, p. 155). Can we use Deleuze to reimagine the Foucault Effect? Can we loosen power’s grip on the subject, showing that resistance is not simply a possibility, but an inevitability? What happens if we explore the effect of Deleuze on Foucault’s disorganized muddle (and vice versa)? Rather than disentangling their ideas, what if we entangle them? Can Foucault AND Deleuze offer lines of flight that extend our theorizing of both power AND performativity?

Deleuze (1995, p. 102) posthumously described Foucault as ‘the greatest thinker of our time’, while Foucault’s speculative reference to a Deleuzian Century suggests a mutual respect. The similarities and differences within their respective canons have already been comprehensively explored. Instead, following Hjorth (2013), we look to *some* of the intersections in their thought. These intersections are points of contact, creating perturbations at the boundary of two intellectual territories where ideas intermingle, resonate momentarily before moving apart, following new trajectories shaped by their entanglement. We can speak of the Foucault Effect on Deleuze and Deleuze’s effect on Foucault; a relation of forces operating in two directions, neither subservient to the other.

The rhizomatic logic of AND encourages us to ‘do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25), so we begin in the middle, where we find Deleuze’s *Anti-Oedipus*; building on the key themes (knowledge, discourse and power) of Foucault’s early works. Foucault’s conception of power ‘operates without a developed notion of desire’ (Lash, 1984, p. 7), making the actor relatively powerless. Desire emerges from the repression of the body by existing relations of power (Stoler, 1995). Deleuze (2016, p. 225) reverses this relationship. ‘[P]ower is an affection of desire’; bestowing the Foucauldian body with creative and powerful desires (Lash, 1984, p. 10), and in the process upends two thousand years of perceived wisdom.
Embracing the power of desire

Since Plato, desire has been the antithesis of reason, a nihilistic or hedonistic, irrational (often sexual) urge driven by lack of something (Linstead & Brewis, 2007). A morbid yearning to fill a void. Desire is an irrational, base instinct that needs to be corralled. Unfettered desires are associated with disorder, chaos and destruction; a disorganizing, rather than organizing force. Desire threatens existing forms of organizing and must be ‘disciplined, so that a law can be created to establish control over it’ (Guattari & Rolnik, 2008, p. 319). As Foucault (2003) shows us, power has been legitimized on the basis that society must repress individuality. Authoritative power limits individual desires. It eradicates the subjective, emotional (and irrational), libidinal behaviours that are driven by desire. Desires must be suppressed to protect individual and collective interests. Appeals to rationality elevate apparently genuine interests above foolish desires.

In contrast, Deleuze asserts that desire is not a libidinal urge we must work to sublimate. It is a fluid and fluxing arrangement of drives and impulses. It is productive, a free-floating energy that is a primary force. Anti-Oedipus extends Freudian desires beyond the confines of the family and simultaneously libidinalizes Marx’s production. Freud’s libidinal economy and Marx’s political economy are one and the same thing; manifestations of immanent embodied drives (Smith, 2016, p. 270). From the single-celled organism to a complex nation-state, desiring is central to life; it is Spinoza’s conatus (the striving to exist) that defines life. Not only is it untethered from the libido, it is externalized. While immanent within the body, desire is defined by an engagement with an exterior entity and the possibility of new relations with that entity.

Power is not some external force controlling bodies. Identities, relations of power, and fixities (such as an individual or an organization) are confluences within the ongoing flow of desires. From this vantage point, no single being or relation of power can ever provide a foundation for life and practice. The individual finds herself entangled in a myriad of relations (self, family, community, organization, state) into which her own desires flow. Rather than power flowing from top to bottom, desire flows around a myriad of rhizomatic social formations. As a result, relations of power are in a constant state of flux, growing, shrinking, merging, dissolving. The state, the organization, the family are not maintained because of an external force or power, but through internal flows of desire.

Our interests are always an effect of desire that is already invested in the social formations we inhabit. The social is ‘the historically determined product of desire’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 29). In the academic workplace, to aspire to gain a professorial chair or improve one’s own citations index are dependent upon the awareness of these as possibilities within a complex social web of pre-existing but constantly changing relations. Organizational actors are bombarded with messages within the workplace (and beyond). These shape (but do not determine) who they are and what they want to achieve in their careers, creating aspirational selves whose identity is aligned (to a lesser or greater degree) with the organizations they inhabit (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009).

However, although desire is an immanent and productive force that brings about change, the relations of power that it creates can lead to antiproduction, where productive relations are prevented from forming (Goodchild, 1996, p. 73). In asserting that ‘no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised’, Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 116) acknowledge that if the body’s desires were fully untethered from social formations, societies would collapse. To ensure that social formations are maintained, every society must control or repress individuals’ desires. Using notions of good and bad, virtues and sins, taboos and guilt (typified by the Oedipus complex), social formations create a form of psychic repression that the body imposes upon itself. Deleuze recognizes that the relations of power that desires create also lead to desires being channelled against the subject from which they
emerge. Shamed, stupefied and docile through psychic repression, the subject channels its desires, willingly reproducing the repressive social formations it inhabits. It is through such repression that the subject appears fixed, locked in a particular identity, battling flows of desire that it struggles to control: ‘desire can be made to desire its own repression’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 105).

A politics of desire

Deleuze recognizes that the channelling of desires is highly developed in the social formations of late capitalism. The capitalist system promotes certain flows of desire while repressing others, creating a web of interests and beliefs that imprison the subject. Anti-Oedipus highlights its repressive tendency; our desires are not our own. Fuelled by flows of capital and marshalled by notions of rationality and reason, desires are converted into practical necessities and financial interests. Appeals to identity and community turn desires into emancipatory and political interests. At the same time, commitments to authority come from interests in stability and permanence. The committed worker must reconcile many conflicting interests when faced with the dilemma of striking to protect her pension. Does she desire her own repression, keep her nose to the grindstone, acquiescing to power in the hope of gaining the promotion she desires for the money and status it brings? Or does she (wo)man the barricades, joining her comrades to protect the retirement she desires for herself and her workplace friends? What we consider to be personal or collective interests are expressions of multiple, often contradictory social commitments that channel desires (Smith, 2016). Underneath individuals’ attempts to realize their own interests we find investments of desire; ‘an enormous flow, all kinds of libidinal-unconscious flows that constitute the delirium of this society’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 263).

While personal and collective interests may be channelled in different, often competing directions, desires are constantly shifting and as a consequence so do relations of power. The forces that create repression are the same forces that bring about change, creating and constantly reconfiguring social formations. Organizing AND disorganizing. For Deleuze the primacy of desire means that change is inevitable: desires reconfigure the social formations that produce them. Desire provides the ‘motor for social action’ (Linstead & Pullen, 2006, p. 1289). It is transformatory. Always ‘capable of derailing something, displacing the social fabric’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 233). Desires are productive; they create something not previously actualized or thought possible. Because of desire, subjects and the organizations they populate are not static fully formed entities, but rather manifestations of processes of becoming.

Deleuze reverses the relation between power and desire, it is out of desire that social formations arise, creating relations of power that then channel and thus repress desires. But desire is never destroyed. Without desire social formations evaporate. Power can never ‘trump’ desire. The two are entwined, desires create structures of power and power shapes desires, but it cannot destroy them. In contrast, prevailing theories of power point towards a ‘politics of tactical constraint within inevitable relations of power’ (Bogue, 1989, p. 106). Desire is ‘a form of resistance’ (Linstead & Thanem, 2007, p. 1490); there is nothing inevitable about existing relations of power, save that new ones will emerge. Totalitarian regimes, megacorporations and familial dynasties will come to pass.

The significance of this reworking of power was not lost on Foucault. It shaped his intellectual desires, leading him to trace a new line of flight in later work, which we now retrace.

After-Oedipus: Drifting Apart AND Folding Together

Anti-Oedipus shaped the subsequent works of both Foucault and Deleuze, sending them off on different trajectories, travelling apart AND coming closer together. Deleuze moves beyond desire,
taking a line of flight deeper into the Foucauldian territory of power and discourse; but we begin by following Foucault’s journey.

In the preface to the American edition of *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault (1983, p. xii) asserted that the book provided answers to a concrete problem: ‘How does one introduce desire into thought, into discourse, into action?’ He saw *Anti-Oedipus* as a ‘manual’ providing ‘An Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life’. The manual tells the reader to:

Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic. [. . .] Do not become enamored of power. (Foucault, 1983, pp. xiii–xiv)

*Anti-Oedipus* affected Foucault. He became Deleuzian. His subsequent work (*The Use of Pleasure*) marked a theoretical shift. Turning away from ‘discursive practices’ and ‘rational techniques that articulate the exercise of powers’ he explored ‘the history of the desiring [wo]man’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 6).

Their rhizomes would intersect again after the death of Foucault. Deleuze’s *Foucault* provided a portrait of his friend, ‘a final likeness you can find only in death, that makes you realize “that’s who they were”’ (Deleuze, 1995, p. 102). Deleuze saw the shift in Foucault’s later work, a line of flight that Deleuze (2006) explores and extends. Folding Foucault’s ideas back upon themselves; creating a portrait of the inside, revealing what perhaps even Foucault had not realized. Identifying the two pre-established axes of knowledge and power within Foucault’s work, Deleuze adds a third: thought. Deleuze does not claim this as his addition, he finds it hiding in plain sight within *The Order of Things* (Deleuze, 2006, p. 80). For Deleuze the ‘ethical Foucault’ is not a new development, it had simply been overlooked.

**Subject AND power redux**

In *Foucault*, Deleuze revisits the subject AND power. The Foucauldian subject does not simply emerge within existing relations of power. Rather the self is created through active thought; the thinking body desires to create an ethical self that escapes the stifling repression of the social formations it inhabits. The self is continually being crafted/performed from the things at its disposal: its own body, the language it possesses and the products (ideas and material objects) it consumes.

To provide an explanation, Deleuze (1993) uses a concept appropriated from Leibniz: The Fold. The subject (or an interiority) is created by the active folding of the outside (the social). This folding occurs because desires are always directed to the exterior; the thinking subject is always ‘invested in the social’ (Kristensen & Pedersen, 2016, p. 79). The self actively creates a boundary between itself and the outside, providing a space where ‘flows of desire can be expressed and actualized as individual and collective interests’ (Kristensen & Pedersen, 2016, p. 79). Importantly, it is a temporal space; the folding of the outside is an ongoing process, the actualization of desire refolds the outside to create new insides. The thinking self is constantly recreating itself and its relationship with the outside, asking ‘What can I do? What do I know? What am I?’ (Deleuze, 1993, p. 95). Three questions: one of power, one of knowledge and one of the self. Thought creates the possibility of new folds, new becomings; rechanneling the desire that flows within. Deleuze sees this in Foucault’s (1990, p. 9) own desire to ‘free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.’ The desiring subject has the
power to rethink both the inside and outside she has created, refolding what she has already produced. The repetitive process of folding creates both continuity and change. A division between inside and outside is maintained through the repetition of performative acts, but each repetition reconfigures both. Through thought the subject changes herself and the outside. Resistance emerges, flows of desire and relations of power change. The Foucauldian process of subjectification is not a result of existing power relations; rather power relations emerge within the social formations that are constantly created through multiple processes of individual subjectifications/foldings driven by desire.

Deleuze changes Foucault’s later work, folding it back upon itself and entangling it with his own. It transforms the Foucauldian rhizome, creating something new, not previously realized, but always there, lying beneath the surface. It reverses the relationship that had been thought into existence. The docile subject was always disobedient. Existing relations of power can and will be disrupted by unruly performances. The first question we posed (What drives the subject to resist prevailing authority, to become subversive?) dissolves. The self is the manifestation of ongoing processes of becoming that are driven by desires. It is constantly changing, recreating itself and the outside. This immanent process is generative. Simultaneously subversive AND compliant, each performative act organizes AND disorganizes. Some flows are maintained, others disrupted. Despite being placed in Foucauldian chains, resistance (and conformance) constantly emerge from the multiplicity of fluxing desires that produces the self. Cabantous et al.’s (2016) supine academic sits within a web of potentially contradictory and competing relations. Invested in multiple social formations (some within the workplace, others outside), through her performative acts she constantly refolds herself, creating a fragmented and conflicted self (Kenny, 2012, p. 1188). Perpetually rechannelling her desires, she conforms to one social formation and in the process resists another. One minute a cog in the capitalist machine, the next, a champion of the oppressed, a leader of thought, an impoverished knowledge worker, a great team player, a loving parent. Through a Deleuzian lens we can understand why McCabe et al. (2020) observed a much more complex form of organizational resistance. In place of a dialectic of compliance OR resistance, we find a multiplicity of ongoing compliances AND resistances as the subject strives to maintain a multiplicity of selves that reflect her competing desires. The subject is multiple, refusing to be corralled by our collective theorizing that seeks to resolve the tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that it inevitably creates.

To understand how this is possible, we turn to the linguistic mechanics of performativity and the micro-processes through which the subject emerges.

**Language and the Power of Performativity**

While Foucault acknowledged the work of Austin on a number of occasions (Lorenzini, 2015), his primary focus was not how to do things with words, but rather how knowledge is created and relations of power are maintained through prevailing discourses. He differentiates between discursive practices (the rules and regimes that create and legitimize knowledge and establish power) and other aspects of language use: non-discursive practices. Of the latter, he suggests ‘there is nothing to be gained from describing this autonomous layer [...] unless one can relate it to other layers, practices, institutions, social relations, political relations, and so on’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 284). Focusing on macro-level discourses of authority, Foucault’s early work sidelines the linguistic micro-processes of the non-discursive. Later he (Foucault, 2010, p. 62) acknowledged the possibility of speech that escapes the constraints of existing relations of power, speech that possesses originary freedom (Foucault, 1990). To understand how the subject’s performative acts escape the chains of authoritative power we again look to Deleuze.
Deleuze AND language

Deleuze has a love-hate relationship with language. He acknowledges its ability to control the subject: ‘Language is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 76). But again and again Deleuze is drawn to language: its creativity, its expressiveness and its transformative potential. He asks: ‘How do we account for the underground workings of a free and present variation that slips through the nets of slavery and eludes the entire situation?’ (Deleuze, 1997, p. 253). He finds the answer in ‘the theatre’ and ‘the stammerer’: pointing towards the limits of speakability that Cabantous et al. (2016) referred to; the performative acts that resist the rules of both language and power.

Deleuze reconceptualizes language and the representational logocentrism that permeates established thought. Propositions do not represent things, but express events that occur outside language, even though we use language to express them. Meaning is not the correspondence between isolated words and particular things. Rather, it emerges when connections (relations) are created between spoken words and the totality of existence. We must understand language in terms of its effect, how it spreads out like a liquid over a ‘metaphysical surface’, constantly connecting and reconnecting things and words in a dynamic process of becoming. It is language that produces and maintains the relations that constitute social formations. It imposes stratifications and creates apparent permanence. It channels desire. Words create and maintain social formations, from the family (with words like parent, child and home) to the state (constituted by leaders, citizens and nations).

Deleuze identifies two components of language: coding AND order-words. Coding provides the ‘rules of the game’ for a social formation. It shapes interests: defines what/who is part of it, what/who does what, how they do it, and what/who has authority and jurisdiction. It provides the glue that holds the social formation together. It establishes illocutionary authority (the power to change relations through an utterance) and what the (perlocutionary) effect will be when the utterance is performed. Leaders and followers are identified, power is distributed. In authoritarian and bureaucratic organizations this might include a formal constitution, or prescriptive legislation to prohibit certain behaviours and implicitly or explicitly allow others. Mission statements and strategies establish goals, interests and values. Coding also comes from informal organizational stories, perpetuating past events that encapsulate what a community wants, and indeed what it does not want. In this way coding maintains an organization, creating a sense of permanence, even though it and its constituents are constantly changing. Stories of origins and identity, success and failure, heroes and villains, coalesce to codify the goals and behaviours of the organization. Terminology, jargon and acronyms create a local patois (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7) that reinforces the organization and its component parts (departments and their functions, people and their roles).

If coding is the glue that holds the organizational machine together, order-words provide the oil that lubricates it. Language transmits signals that allow activities to be synchronized. Order-words are illocutionary, they make something happen. Commands, orders, questions and assertions all carry a ‘social obligation’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 79), creating a particular response within the social formation. ‘Margins are being eroded’ is not a statement of fact from the accountant’s performative routine, it is an order that ripples through the organization. Selling prices and/or sales volumes must be increased, or perhaps it is a call for all hands to the pumps, to reduce waste and push up productivity? With collective interests and relations already defined by coding, the performance of order-words enables the organization to channel its collective desires productively.

Language is thus a complex of coding AND order-words, continually mobilized to maintain social formations. Statements of objective fact and representational narratives have to be
understood as illocutionary acts that establish how to interpret the world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 80) and thus how to respond. In contrast to some interpretations (see Czarniawska, 2016) all language use is therefore performative: it has an effect.

**Territories AND deterritorialization**

However, if language is limited to coding AND order-words, we simply reconceptualize language in terms of ossifying discourses that have been brought into being through a particular reading of Foucault. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 62) acknowledge what Barthes called the *intellectual imperialism* (or fascism) of language, acknowledging that it is a territorializing force, controlling and limiting what is possible.

To explore this tendency, Deleuze and Guattari draw on nature, considering social animals and how through performative acts territories are created and maintained. First boundaries are marked out with signs (scents, dung, calls, etc.); defining an inside by delineating it from an outside. Then the territory is maintained through the ongoing repetition of these behaviours, typified by the refrain of songbirds. Having claimed a physical space, performative acts also define what is permitted within it. Some acts signal aggression, others acquiescence, collectively cementing social bonds that channel desires. Through repetition of certain behaviours (performative refrains/routines), roles (subjects) and authority (power) are established. The social formation is stratified, shaping relations within the group, and also determining what/who is excluded from the group and its territory. The performative process of territorialization produces a fold, creating an organized/stratified inside (a territory) separated from a chaotic outside. Humans use their own complex language systems to perform the same function. We colonize physical and intellectual spaces.

However, Deleuze also stresses the processual, immanent aspects of language, presenting it as a rhizomatic entanglement always open to variation and new relations. Mirroring the self, language is never fixed; it possesses originary freedom. While language may territorialize, it also deterritorializes. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 101) recognize that language exerts a power (*pouvoir*: authority) on social formations; the ossifying function of the archetypal Foucauldian discourse that territorializes and stratifies. But they also recognize another form of power within language, the power (*puissance*: capacity) for variation. This means that there is natural variation within the performative refrains that maintain territories (whether intended or not). It is inevitable that we will do new things with words.

Deleuze’s work is littered with explorations of non-representational writing and poetry by experimental authors2 who create new relations (of ideas and words). Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 47) argue that such authors challenge existing social representations ‘in a much more effective way than a critique would have done and brings about a deterritorialization of the world that is itself political’. They acknowledge the emancipatory potential in the creative expression of these minority voices (women, Jews, Irish, queers, junkies, etc.). Such writers’ stuttering performativity creates a nomadic and parasitic language of the outside, resisting and subverting prevailing norms. Refolding established language back upon itself, they *push the limits of speakability*, finding ways to surface and rechannel repressed desires. It is a form of writing that enables the self to say ‘no’ to power. Its performative effect disturbs the order it finds, bringing about deterritorialization(s). But the writing also has a generative effect. New meanings coalesce around words, discourses are reconfigured, relations of power shift. New territories and new social formations emerge and are maintained through new performative routines. The 21st-century organization has become more diverse, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable because of the power of minority voices that were previously unheard.
Deterritorialization: The power of words to change

The (perhaps minor) shifts in the discourse of 21st-century capitalism show that deterritorialization does not just occur through experimental writing. Nor does deterritorialization have to be deliberate. Vásquez, Schoeneborn and Sergi (2016) reveal that words both order AND disorder the ongoing process of organizing. Language use is not defined by strict rules, but pragmatically determined as it is deployed. Through repetition meaning coalesces around words, but it is never fixed. Meaning seeps away from the words we use. Each repetition creates variation; established meanings dissolve and new ones emerge. Language never closes in on itself, words do not have any meaning in themselves. It is only within the wider constellation of voices that words can be understood. This is what Lecercle (2002, p.166) calls the ‘Humpty Dumpty Principle’, captured by Lewis Carroll.

“When I use a word”, Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less”.

“The question is”, said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things?”

“The question is”, said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all”.

Deleuze’s response might be that neither is master; meaning (or sense) emerges from within a linguistic arrangement of bodies, symbols, and images.

Although the inherent sociality of language is implicit in Austin’s pragmatics, it is brought to the fore in A Thousand Plateaus. The embodied illocutionary act is always directed towards somebody. Its perlocutionary impact is contingent upon context: the relationship between the spoken words and the bodies with which they coexist. Words only take on meaning when they are heard or read. A ‘performative statement is nothing outside of the circumstances that make it performative’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 82).

Alcadipani, Hassard and Islam (2018, p. 1475) reveal this in an organizational setting, showing how a manager’s attempt to establish their authority with the order-words ‘I’m the new sheriff in town’ quickly created derision, scorn and resistance in the workplace. Seizing on the word ‘sheriff’, the music, imagery and language of the Western film genre are mobilized in the performative acts of workers, ridiculing the manager and the knowledge he holds. The disconnect between the illocutionary intent of the self-styled sheriff and the subsequent perlocutionary impact of his words are revealed through interviews.

The sheriff might hold a bachelor’s in management degree and went to a fucking business school where he learned all that shit. But quality and modern manufacturing tools are half good sense and half bollocks anyway. It (Lean) is useless. (Alcadipani et al., 2018, p. 1477)

The performative power of any linguistic act is immediate and temporal. It emerges in the here and now, taking on a life of its own as it permeates the social formations from which it emerged. The sheriff cannot control the performative impact of his words. The quote is one strand in a dynamic web of interwoven performative acts that shape the dynamics of ongoing organizational discourses. Each iteration, each performative act is different; meaning is always shifting.

To understand how language works, we need to consider how it is used to create meaning. For Deleuze, the expressive element of language is largely ignored in traditional theories of language. Differentiating between forms of content and forms of expression, words provide content, but the utterance gives expression. These elements are independent, autonomous and heterogeneous. Meaning
depends upon both, but it is determined by neither. It comes from the connections made between the two. Words are performed (whether spoken or written) by a wordsmith, crafted to create connections. A whole range of rhetorical tools (metaphor, simile, intonation, physical gestures, slogans, emojis, mimicry, clichéd refrains, silence, repetition) are mobilized to give expression to words. Alkadipani et al.’s (2018) narrative reveals that employees deployed music, images, slogans and refrains to perpetuate an ironic counter-narrative that deterritorialized authority. Images and refrains drawn from the wider social milieu infuse the ongoing stream of performative acts, collectively creating a subversive discourse of resistance. Within each act the speaker gives performative force to her words; expression and content travel in opposite directions, creating ‘a rupture in the order of things’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 28). Representation is subverted or abandoned; what remains is the power of the utterance, an expression of desires. A posse of cowboys musters to take on ‘the big-city law-man and his high-falutin’ ideas’. Without a gun in sight, they all claim, ‘I shot the sheriff’. Stripped of direct meaning the expressive force of words and their performative power to channel individual and collective desires is revealed.

Thus, language is first and foremost a creative, expressive (poetic), embodied and temporal performance that is never predetermined. Meaning emerges in the utterance (or on the page). Deleuze does not deny the imperialist tendencies of language, but he recognizes the openness of language and its capacity to say things that might appear impossible or unspeakable. Where Foucault designates the expressive in a negative way, ‘situated in a space which is complementary only to a field of statements’ (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 42–43), Deleuze embraces its generativity, showing from where and how the subject finds a voice to express Foucault’s *originary freedom*. A performative freedom that speaks an alternative truth to power, resisting the apparent restrictions of authority and the narratives perpetuated to try and keep its grip on power.

**Discussion: Dissolving Power OR Performativity**

The central aim of this paper is to explore the possibilities that arise when a Deleuzian lens is used to dissolve power OR performativity by embracing the desire to resist (AND comply) to bring about new forms of organizing. Our discussion is structured around two central questions posed earlier in the paper. These questions reveal lines of flight which we now trace, drawing upon two recent papers that have already furthered our collective theorizing.

**What drives the subject to resist prevailing authority, to become subversive?**

The power-resistance dialectic remains a significant focus for the OMT community. The issue of organizational power/control and the efforts of subjects/individuals to resist it remains a key topic for our theorizing. Despite shifts in the dialectic and debates about the nature of organizational resistance, the question of why and how resistance emerges in the workplace remains inadequately captured in our theorizing of performativity.

Harding et al. (2017) tackle this head on, revealing that the subject is simultaneously an effect of power (subjectified) and a field of power (agent) with the ability to resist, freeing the subject from Newton’s (1998) Foucauldian ‘Catch 22’. Their performative theory of resistance reveals the subject’s ability to say ‘no’ when power threatens the self (Harding et al., 2017, p. 1209). Ybema and Horvers (2017) further extend our understanding of workplace struggles, showing that resistance AND compliance unfold through multiple individual performances. The subject can comply and/or resist from moment to moment, indicating that the organizational actor is not cast in one role or another, but adopts a multiplicity of subject positions. ‘[O]rganizational space is always prescriptively structured and, yet, enacted and transformed in multiple ways’ (Villadsen, 2021, p. 492). However, despite these advances there is still work to do.
Harding et al. (2017, p. 1226) implicitly reveal Spinoza’s *conatus*, the striving to resist when the subjectified self faces an existential threat to the identity it has brought into being. The subject’s ‘desire to persist in that identity I recognize as “me”’ invokes an act of resistance, within the ongoing flux of becoming. The resistance revealed does not seek to ‘overthrow prevailing normative regimes’, but rather to ‘inhibit neoliberalism’s potential to reduce the human to nothing but cogs in organizational machines’ (Harding et al., 2017, p. 1226). The subject has agency to resist through some of their performative acts, while complying through others. Yet ultimately they appear to desire their ongoing repression (to remain a cog in the machine), as the organization they inhabit exerts its authority.

It is easy to apply this picture to a 19th-century factory worker, but does it reflect the current situation of a senior manager leading a public healthcare institution within a developed neoliberal economy? A situation where resistance simultaneously manages to support and undermine what can appear contradictory relations of power (McCabe et al., 2020)? Can we build on Harding et al.’s (2017) work to better explain the paradox of simultaneous resistance AND compliance? Can we update the imagery of subjectified spinning cogs and monolithic organizational machines?

To reflect the paradoxes of resistance in our working lives, we need to revisit the subjectified self and her place within the social formations that she co-creates through her performative acts. To ask why she both resists and complies with authoritative power. Harding et al. (2017, p. 1216) acknowledge the subject’s desire to persist, but how do we theorize this desire? Deleuze tells us that desires run deeper than relations of power, offering an escape from its apparently stifling embrace. Can we fold desire into the work of Harding et al. (2017), so that the 21st-century subject becomes a more nuanced cog in the machine?

What if we reimagine the machine in which the subject finds herself? Charlie Chaplin’s imagery of the human cog in the giant mechanical factory machine worked well in the factory age but our *Modern Times* are different to his. Can we reimagine the subject AND the machine? What if we add desire?

It is desiring that designs, builds and powers the machine; a force that ‘makes the social work’ (Pedersen & Kristensen, 2019, p. 195). Our collective desire to organize the world we inhabit allows the social formations (the machines we imagine) to emerge. Subjects are always invested in the social formations they co-create. Workers’ desires are invested (to a lesser or greater degree) in the machine that is the workplace. Roles and responsibilities emerge and with them power is distributed: who can do what, and how they must behave. The machine must be organized: the operative, the supervisor and the senior leader all have a role, a costume and a script that informs their performative acts. As Harding et al. (2017) reveal, even the leader finds herself typecast. She becomes just another cog. The family machine and the school machine have already taught her that she has to keep her desires in check, and so she complies with the organizational machine’s rules, dutifully adopting the role she has been cast in. Put simply, desire creates the machine but for it to persist the individual’s desires must be corralled. We all desire our own repression. But how do we understand resistance? How can the cog ever kick against the machine?

We must remember that the monolithic self is an illusion, only persisting through repetitive performative acts. There is no fixed, invariant essence beneath the performance of self. Rousseau’s noble savage, unrepressed by language and social formations, does not reside beneath a performative cloak. The subject emerges from a body through a process of becoming, by folding and refolding conscious thought she establishes an interior (self) and exterior (other). Harding et al. (2017) show that resistance is invoked when the subjectified self is threatened, but the imagined monolithic cog is never fixed, it is always in flux, a multiplicity of potentially contradictory cogs (leader, follower, technical expert, practitioner, novice, colleague, campaigner). The threat that the self faces could therefore be an internal one, a schizophrenic
tension between constituent cogs. And the cog/self finds herself enmeshed in a multiplicity of machines (inside and outside the workplace). Cabantous et al.’s (2016) supine academic may appear paradoxical, but perhaps what we imagine to be a self desiring its own repression is equally resisting a threat from a machine we haven’t noticed. Like Kafka’s Joseph K., are we filling the void with our own interpretations (Huber, 2019, p. 1836)? Is it better if our theorizing embraces the contradictions we observe? Folding Harding et al.’s (2017) work back upon itself draws attention to the processual, ephemeral contradictions of self and the many threats that emerge from moment to moment invoking an ongoing stream of performative acts that are compliant AND resistant. It also surfaces the generative force of desire, and with it, the possibility of positive, emancipatory change.

Desires produce ‘lines of flight and movements of deterritorialization’ that are ‘primary determinations’ (Deleuze, 2016, p. 227). No matter how repressive or suffocating some relations of power appear, they cannot obliterate Foucault’s ‘desiring [wo]man’. Desire continually flows from the subjectivized body and, while it may be channelled in non-productive (repressive) flows, it is never finalized; constantly changing, fluxing and leaking, spilling out into the machine.

The subject is a multiplicity of desires, channelled into the machine(s) she inhabits; but neither is ever fixed. The subject is always in the middle, offering resistance AND yet still turning: simultaneously changing the machine AND maintaining it. Deterritorializing AND reterritorializing through fold upon fold, upon fold. Endlessly changing her self and in the process the machine(s) she is invested in. She is not singular. She is multiple.

Thus the ‘problem of resistance’ dissolves; the social is constituted in, and through, active resistance. Our collective desire to organize results in the repression of desires and the creation of subjects shaped by the relations of power that emerge within the machine they have brought into existence. But at the same time, desires to maintain individual and collective identities within the workplace mean that no relation of power is ever fixed. Subjects may appear to desire their own repression, but equally they desire to maintain an identity that endures through their journey of becoming. Thus resistance emerges when that identity is threatened. It takes the form of micropolitical performative acts that resist but do not destroy the machine in which the subject is invested. The subject rages against the machine she has co-created, but she seldom seeks to destroy it, only subvert it. Her desire is to reconfigure the machine to protect her identity. Thus, resistance AND conformance exist in a mutual embrace in the ongoing process of organizing. An embrace maintained through performative acts.

What does it mean to push the limits of speakability?

Austin’s work deterritorializes structuralist readings that present language as a set of rules used to represent an independent reality. Language becomes an active force that constitutes our collective lives. Post-structuralist scholars have further deterritorialized the structuralist conception by politicizing language. It is no longer a neutral force creating a particular reality. Bourdieu (1991, p. 107) asserted that the ‘power of words is nothing other than the delegated power of the spokesperson’. But is this true? Can we bestow power to the words of the powerless, allowing them to say things that are unspeakable?

Deleuze gives the performative act the power (perlocutionary force) to change relations of power, not simply maintain them. Using Alcadipani et al. (2018) we have illustrated how the way language is deployed shapes the (perlocutionary) effect of the performative act. Words do not have meaning in themselves, meaning emerges from the social situation and how the words are deployed. Returning to Alcadipani et al.’s (2018) paper allows us to show it is possible to change relations of power and how a subjectified minority can empower itself and resist.
Alcadipani et al.’s (2018) shopfloor workers originally resisted by not complying with new procedures. But when wholesale disciplinary action followed, the workers outwardly complied and found new ways of enacting their resistance. Folding the sheriff’s words back upon themselves, the workers mounted a campaign, pouring scorn on the delegated spokesperson (the sheriff) and the managerial power he spoke for, ridiculing power through a succession of performative acts that created an alternative fantasy narrative.

What if we fold Deleuze into the work of Alcadipani et al. (2018)? The collective response of the workers becomes a struggle to reclaim territory. Following an incursion into their workspace through the physical imposition of the visual management techniques of lean (whiteboards, charts, pictures) and the eradication of non-productive material, the visual tropes of the Wild West signalled the workers’ claim to the territory which had been taken from them. These clandestine defecations signalled that the old cowboys were still in town. The subsequent removal of these provocative markers led to their immediate replacement. The fight for the territory was being contested and the cowboys escalated their performative efforts. More posters appeared reinforced by Country and Western refrains, that symbolically echoed through the territory thanks to their continued control of the shopfloor PA. Using their ringtones, individuals repeated the now familiar refrains to signal they were part of the posse. Star-shaped badges appeared on workwear, further confirming who was a cowboy and who was not. The workers had seized the stage, they were creating an ongoing collective performance, with roles and costumes. They were reorganizing and redefining their territory. In the process they subjectified themselves and created a social formation: a machine within a machine, a territory within a territory. Denied the agency to resist the imposition of new working practices, they created a shared identity based on performative resistance and showed that collectively they could deterritorialize the space that imperial powers were trying to claim in the name of (Lean) progress. This echoes the material and physical aspect of performativity that Harding et al. (2017) already highlighted, but it goes further.

Deleuze shows us that collective performative acts create a theatrical performance with the power (perlocutionary force) to change relations of power. The silenced voice of the powerless can and does find a way to speak to power, expressing something that a string of words could never capture. And in the process it produces new relations of power, both within the territory it maintains and with the outside. It reveals a more progressive form of performativity in which existing relations of power become malleable. The power-resistance dialectic dissolves when we trace alternative lines of flight.

Conclusion

All organizing is an expression of desires to create order and finalities that cannot be; producing metastable translations that inevitably lead to tension, paradox and contradiction. Becoming Deleuzian allows us to organize AND disorganize. We do not seek to create conceptual closure; we impose no unifying process for theorizing power and performativity.

Instead we have traced two lines of flight, exploring the complex flows of desires that constitute the self and the linguistic performative micro-processes that enable the apparently powerless subject to resist prevailing authority.

We present desire as a generative fluid and fluxing force that continually folds and refolds existing relations to bring about change, changing subjects and the organizations they inhabit. Rather than fixing the subject within existing monolithic relations of power, every social formation is constituted in, and through, acts of resistance AND compliance driven by desires. Freed from the shackles of normative power, performativity is recast as the ‘creation of new possibles’ (Lazzarato, 2017, p. 52). This reading supports a more progressive form of performativity (Wickert & Schaefer, 2015) and creates new possibilities that can build upon Harding et al.’s (2017) theory of performative resistance.
To understand just how the desiring [wo]man is able to escape the Foucauldian ‘Catch 22’, we have explored the linguistic micro-processes that make performative resistance not only possible, but inevitable. Using the empirical work of Alcadipani et al. (2018) we illustrated the performative freedom of language and its ability to deterritorialize.

Deleuze’s own writing also illustrates the possibility of deterritorialization. He and Guattari flick the Vs at established academic genres. Trying to ‘neutralize the effects of power linked to their own discourse [they provide] so many invitations to let oneself be put out, to take one’s leave of the text and slam the door shut’ (Foucault, 1983, p. xiv). Never seeking to homogenize; preferring to embrace multiplicity and ambiguity, their performance is a radical, definitely political act of resistance; but it is not revolutionary (if by revolutionary we mean replacing one dominant discourse with another). Their aim is to unsettle AND destabilize AND subvert. To resist existing ways of organizing thought; to deterritorialize while avoiding permanent reterritorializations. To dissolve.

Our writing is Deleuzian, it is both an act of micro-resistance AND one of compliance. Perhaps it is decaffeinated, reflecting nothing more than an aesthetic desire to act otherwise (Caldwell, 2007). Equally, it could be seen as two writers indulging a homoerotic Deleuze fetish through mimicry. Perhaps both are valid criticisms? However, rather than defining what this article is (and is not), we want to end by reflecting upon the effect it could have. Our desire was to explore the possibilities that arise from viewing power AND performativity through a Deleuzian lens, to embrace multiplicities and simultaneities, to think in terms of AND rather than OR. To do this we brought into focus the inevitability of individual and collective resistance that emerges through the ‘subterranean, microscopic changes that always go on in the bowels of organizations, changes that may never acquire the status of formal organizational systems and routines but are no less important’ (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 580); dissolving the gap between the micro and the macro, between the empirical and the theoretical. Producing lines of flight that others will extend. Becoming Deleuzian.

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Notes
1. While we fully acknowledge the contributions of Guattari to Deleuze’s thinking and writing, we’ll refer to the body of thought used as Deleuze’s for reasons of consistency.
2. Including Lewis Carroll, Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs and James Joyce.

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