Organization

Spacing and Timing

Geoff Jones, Christine McLean and Paolo Quattrone

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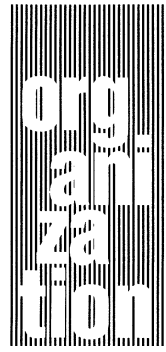
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organization

introduction

Spacing and Timing

Geoff Jones

Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, UK

Christine McLean

School of Management, UMIST, UK

Paolo Quattrone

Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, UK

(Lui): L'amore non esiste . . .
(Lei): . . . ed è per questo che lo facciamo . . . lo facciamo perché esista.

(Him): Love does not exist . . .
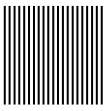(Her): . . . This is why we make it . . . we make it for it to exist.

(from *A/R, Andata + Ritorno*, by Marco Ponti, 2004)

Abstract. *The aim of this special issue is to explore organizing processes in ways which do not assume an a priori existence of space and time. Rather than providing a summary of the papers collected here, this introduction illustrates how Spacing and Timing relate to issues of knowing, organizing, mediation, engagement, alterity and absence/ presence. We examine how various actions and practices may be seen as seeking to achieve order but also concomitantly create further openings and orderings. Finally, while this introduction attempts to highlight a range of issues relating to this process, the development of alternative vocabularies, approaches, and insights are required to develop this work further.* ***Key words.*** *absence and presence; alterity; inscriptions; mediation; organizing; time and space*

The papers collected in this special issue were originally presented at a conference on Spacing and Timing held in Palermo in November 2001. An extensive range of themes and issues was examined and academics attended from a diverse set of disciplines (philosophy, accounting, cognitive sciences, studies in science and technology, organizational theory, semiotics, geography, etc.). Furthermore, the interpretation of the notion of 'Spacing and Timing' went well beyond our particular understandings, and different ideas and issues emerged.[1] Although this variety and uncertainty was rather disconcerting initially, by the second day it seemed that the uneasy feeling had turned to curiosity and interest in exploring the various issues around Spacing and Timing. By the end of the event, the strange combination of the words Spacing and Timing appeared to have gained greater currency again.

So what are Spacing and Timing? One way of engaging with these concepts is by first relating them to issues of knowing. Bowker and Star stated that knowing has a clear space and time dimension because it means to create 'a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put' (1999: 10). However, these boxes, these spatio-temporal coordinates, are not necessarily or likely to be created in the same way, and each way of ordering is a way of creating openings and potentially chaos elsewhere (Bateson, 1972; Bowker and Star, 1999; Law, 1994). In this sense, rather than focusing on space and time we need to highlight the creation and assemblages of Spacing(s), Timing(s) and Acting(s), i.e. various actions that endeavour to make order; however, this requires a great deal of energy and work (Latour, 1997), and in doing so, it creates the potential for disorder.

Thus, Spacing and Timing are, in a second instance, an issue of mediation, negotiation, and opening and closings, for attempts to achieve order and organizings (in a sense of a centred, singular and coordinated form) require a great deal of work. This emphasis on negotiation and mediation introduces a third and final set of issues: the notions of alterity, absence/presence and engagement. For instance, we could describe what happened at the Spacing and Timing conference in terms of actor-networks, by following ourselves as actors of the event. In so doing we could have offered an account of a Spacing and Timing that ended in a precise space and time (i.e. the conference held in Palermo in November 2001), a Spacing and Timing that would have a precise chronology and geography, that would lead to a gathering but would exclude the other accounts that made that gathering (and indeed this special issue) possible. We are sure that if we did that, 'despite [our] best efforts . . . , this talk of networks would tend to fix things and imply predictable trajectories'

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(Callon and Law, 2004: 7–8). We would then lose the apparent ability of the words Spacing and Timing to engage with those dozens of people who saw in them something that we clearly did not. We would become blind (Bowker and Star, 1999) by the same fact of following those who now are able to be heard (e.g. us or the call for papers, etc.). In our actor-network theory account of the conference, we would fall into a modernist view of theory for which 'the gaze of theoria could only read what was written in terms of the same—it [would] not admit spaces of alterity' (Crang and Thrift, 2001: 10). Spacing and Timing are thus an issue of alterity (Ricoeur, 1990; Lévinas, 2002; Lee and Brown, 1994; Callon and Law, 2004; Hetherington, 1998, 2004), for they are also a problem of accounting for the Other's apparent absence from orderings and organizings, when it is indeed present (Callon and Law, 2004), although this presence is magisterially hidden behind what seems to be an ordered organization (Quattrone, 2004). Thus to develop an understanding of Spacing, Timing and Organizing requires an insight into the creation of presences and absences.

However, it is important to point out that this is not some attempt to make everything present, because this would fall into a modernist project reproducing familiar and problematic representational practices. Rather, we wish to search out new ways of conceptualizing issues of ordering and organizing, which are aware (and respectful) of the absence/presence of the Other that makes orderings and organizings possible. For Niels Viggo Hansen and Nigel Thrift in this issue, this requires the development of alternative vocabularies and ideas of Spacing and Timing. Hans Rämö, in order to gain some insights into current issues relating to space and time in organizations, provides a typology of contemporary space–time categorizations.

The problems of alterity and of absence *and* presence are important issues when considering Spacing and Timing with regard to the practices of organizing.[2] For instance, if we stay with the example of the conference, despite the various orderings and interests generated by the words Spacing and Timing, people gathered in a place at a given time to discuss the notion of Spacing and Timing. As stated by Hansen in this issue, the conference managed to constitute a space and time for issues of Spacing and Timing to be discussed and this required the actions of many, in addition to their patience (e.g. listening to plenary speeches and presentations of papers; Stengers, 2001[3]). From an organizational point of view, the crucial aspect is how we account for the ways in which some organizing practices and inscriptions have various, concurrent and competing characters and rationales (Bloomfield and McLean, 2004; Quattrone, 2004). This needs to be understood in relation to the creation and interweaving of Spacings, Timings and Actings, but also to the proliferation, circulation and shifting of some inscriptions and practices and not others. For instance, whereas some may be seen to maintain 'rigid' object positions (although being displaced in other contexts and

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uses), others lose it and disappear in this journey.[4] This issue of what counts and what becomes credible is important as it not only raises problems concerning how we account for such processes and entities (e.g. organizations), but also how a reliance on a synchronic view of organizing excludes the Other. Even references to many spaces and times may cloud the picture, because this may merely reproduce a reliance on a neat and tidy representation of how things work in some discrete, synchronic and commensurable form.[5] In order to examine these aspects further, let us first set the scene by exploring some central and sometimes distorted concepts in the form of mediation, translation and negotiation.
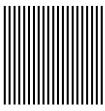
Spacing, Timing and Organizing: Negotiation, Translation, Openings and Closings

As often remarked in studies reflecting on the contribution of actor-network theory, the use of the terms 'network' and 'translation' has often 'betrayed' the intentions of those who have introduced them. In this respect, Latour suggests that:

> When the term 'network' was firstly introduced [it] clearly meant a series of transformations—translations, traductions—which could not be captured by any of the traditional terms of social theory. With the new popularization of the word network it now means transport without deformation, and instantaneous, unmediated access to every piece of information. That is clearly the opposite of what we meant. (1999a: 15)

What is often forgotten in the use of the notion of translation is that, rather than existing as a normal feature of our world, transportation without deformation requires a great deal of work in terms of negotiation, fabrication and the assemblage of many entities (Hutchins, 1995). In a sense, at least in some parts of organization studies, saying that space and time are constructed or fabricated, that various alliances and translations are required to achieve order and control over spaces and times, has become so common that one may ask whether there is still need for further studies in the area.

In order to answer this question, the following example by Bruno Latour provides an interesting exploration of the issues of transportation—with and without deformation. This example addresses issues of Space and Time by narrating the imaginary journey of two twins. One twin takes a journey through thick jungle. This involves complex negotiations with many mediators and others going in many directions, with differing ends and goals (e.g. branches, snakes, sticks). Thus, this is a journey of one suffering body amongst many. As Latour describes it, 'each minute, she opens a few centimetres of a pathway, but she ages more than one minute. She sweats. Her body bears the traces of her efforts; each metre can be read in the bloody scars made by thorns

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and ferns' (1997: 173). How does this compare with her twin brother who sits comfortably in his first-class carriage on his air-conditioned train? His body bears few traces of the journey, he may pay no attention to the places he passes, and the trip may feel like nothing. With all entities aligned in the same direction, speeding through space and time, this appears to be an uneventful trip, 'no memory of anything to mention', no negotiations and thus no event.

When studying these issues of transportation, deformation and linearity, it is important to examine the work involved, i.e. examining whether translations and displacements involve large or small deformations and transformations, and the role and properties of the other entities, such as various mediators and intermediaries (including issues of number, size, quality and intensity). For example, within our 'modern' world we have an inordinate number of carefully monitored and heavily institutionalized rigid bodies (Latour, 1997) (e.g. standards, trains, rulers, bullets, gears, constants) which through a great deal of work may appear to remain relatively untransformed through transportation. However, as Latour (1997: 183) points out: 'That a mobile may travel without mutating is so rare, so miraculous, so expensive, that it has to be accounted for and explained in detail.' Thus, we never encounter time and space in an *a priori* form (i.e. 'in time' or 'in space').

To illustrate the point, Latour (1997) provides a useful example: the photographic gun. This gun was invented by Marey to visualize the precise motions of doves in flight; not to 'geometrize' the passage of time, but to create more times and spaces in order to avoid the fuzzy and uncontrollable patterns of flight, which could then be captured and examined at leisure; not in some spaceless, timeless, actionless way, but in terms of more rather than less. As Latour notes: 'The flying dove did not live "in time" before being killed by the gun "in space". The photographic gun does not kill, that's the trick. What is important for Marey is that the events of the flying dove occur now many times, there, in the beautiful summer sky, but also, hundreds of times at will, down there in the Station physiologique' (1997: 181).[6] The result is a proliferation of timings, spacings and actants, which become connected via many shortcuts, translations, mediations and associations that we encounter on a daily basis, and can be viewed as both enabling and constraining in terms of possibilities.

We can relate these issues to another familiar example with regard to the role of audit, management information practices and technologies that underlie many aspects of organizational life (e.g. Boland, 2001; Sahay, 1998; Schulze and Boland, 2000).[7] This includes the role of various inscriptions in producing further spaces, times and actions in relation to specific sets of standards, constants, measurements, etc. (e.g. the use of forms and systems in mental health to measure and assess a patient's needs/problems).[8] These practices of assessing and measuring

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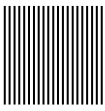
tend to focus on the selected minutiae of organizational work and individuals, in terms of the creation of subjects and objects of the information management process[9] (e.g. needs assessment and performance evaluation). They are also associated with a process of simplification and standardization in which further times–spaces–actants and acts of engagement are created. For instance, the focus may be on what is seen to 'count' within different orderings (e.g. what is considered measurable or quantifiable in terms of assessing clinical practice/performance in relation to issues of quality and value for money); however, these practices can also enable further openings, discretion and difference.

In summary, with respect to the issues of negotiation, translation, openings and closings, we need to address three main areas of concern. First, we need to consider all the work involved (e.g. the level of mediation) especially by those who are not necessarily taken into account or acknowledged in the process, as well as the characters associated with mediators and intermediaries, such as 'intensity', 'speed', 'quality'. Second, the issue of 'well' alignment and the ways in which notions of 'good' and 'bad' are constituted in terms of outcomes and practice needs to be examined—in particular, the ways in which these may differ between perspectives and orderings, and the ascription of integrity to one version rather than the others. Third, the process of achieving the 'well' alignment of intermediaries in one ordering may invariably lead to problematic alignments, transformations or issues elsewhere.

Rethinking the issue of stability and heterogeneity in relation to what 'counts' also concerns Barbara Czarniawska in her piece on action nets. This includes the raising of questions such as how 'some translations, like some calculations, have more currency than others' but are then used with opposite purposes; and how organizations are reified through talk. Similarly, François Cooren and Gail Fairhurst seek in their paper to explore how conversations and narratives contribute to the constitution of what counts as an organization by exploring how not all conversations constitute organizing practices and not all speeches constitute speech acts.[10] They explore the properties of speech acts in this milieu of struggles to combine heterogeneities with organizing achievements and provide some interesting reflections on this process of organizings and the role of mediators in the creation of Spacings and Timings.

Consequently, by attending to technical action, relations and practices, the focus moves away from assuming that isochrony and isotopy exist as constant and normal features of the world, and towards the creation and proliferation of times, spaces and actions, and organizations (Latour, 1997). In order to explore some of the issues highlighted so far and within the papers of this issue, the next section examines mediation with regard to the role of inscriptions and the interplay between centres of calculation and issues of difference and discretion.

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Spacing, Timing and Organizing: Inscriptions and Alterity

Much attention has focused on the ways through which certain processes of organizing become institutionalized and stabilized in centres of calculation (Latour, 1987, 1999b), especially from an accounting perspective and in relation to issues of translation and mediation (Briers and Chua, 2001; Carmona et al., 2002; Ezzamel and Willmott, 1998; Hoskin and Macve, 1986; Jones and Dugdale, 2002; Miller and O'Leary, 1994; Kirk and Mouritsen, 1996; Robson, 1991, 1992). However, less attention has been dedicated to how this translation continues once the stability is achieved and the centres of discretion are created (Munro, 1999; Quattrone and Hopper, 2001; Quattrone and Hopper, in press). If it is true that points of discontinuity are achieved in the ways in which, for instance, calculations are made (Hoskin and Macve, 1986) and organizing attempts succeed, this needs to cope with the multiple (sometimes supporting, but also competing or even opposing) interpretations of these forms of calculation and organizing. Mediations and translations need to be explored in relation to these alterities, to 'minority reports' which can have a strong role in this organizational effort. In commenting on the work of De Certeau (1980), Crang (2001: 147) noted: 'Foucault too often set us traps for the world in advance, so after the initial surprise, and a stimulus of heteronomy, the world becomes remarkably ordered again—leaving practices "the black sun of theory"'. The same seems to happen with the notion of translation. How this heterogeneity of understandings may coexist with the appearance of homogeneity of organizational forms and actions seems to be obscure (and obscured). For instance, going back to the example of the conference, we did mediate (and a lot!) to organize that gathering; however, the process of mediation went beyond what we actively did. In a sense, it had a *vis propria*, which established mediation with subjects and actants that were absent from our horizon but that still established a presence at that event.

This is illustrated by Peter Dobers and Lars Strannegård (in this issue) when they reflect on the paradoxical translation of the Cocoon in its journey from its first exhibition in Stockholm, where it was presented as an attempt to escape the networked society in which we live, to New York, where it then became a worldwide recognized and connected piece of contemporary art. In one sense its absence commenced once the exhibition in Stockholm was closed, and with this the strange object became appropriated and translated in many times and spaces. Thus, whereas the authors described the aim of the Cocoon as being the provision of isolation, instead it became viewed as a global phenomenon.

Rather than merely focusing our attention on centres of discretion (Munro, 1999; Quattrone and Hopper, 2001; Quattrone and Hopper, in press), the notion of dispersed calculation (Czarniawska, in this issue) and the proliferation of hybrids in organizational spaces and times, we

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need to find ways of understanding how (and why) these forms of organizing coexist. In other words, more work is required on three main areas of enquiry. Firstly, how (theoretically and empirically) centres (and forms) of calculations are subjectively interiorized, thus becoming something different. Secondly, how they are constantly translated while maintaining a sense of organizational functioning. Finally, how this relates to issues of space and time without resorting to accounts that rely on something existing independently and 'out there'. What seems to be missing from the analysis is a focus upon the achievement of organizational actions and outcomes in relation to the roles and relations of various organizational actants, which are not necessarily coherent and commensurable (in a Kuhnian sense; Kuhn, 1970).

One means (although not the only one) of escaping this spatio-temporal trap is to concentrate our attention on the role of inscriptions, because these have such a central theoretical position in the construction of the concept of action at a distance and knowledge fabrication. Although inscriptions have been seen as crucial in constructing centres of calculation, this constitutive ability tends to be explored in one direction (that of achieving normalities rather than creating difference).

One way to reflect on this issue may be to recover the power of inscriptions as actants and consider them as actions that (may) intimately generate the interest of the 'Other', which, indeed, can be equally important in maintaining the visibility and stability of the centre of calculation. One needs to conceive of the reference, the sign, not only as an inert trace left by the organizational work that may achieve 'success' and therefore visibility and stability, but also as a force (Fabbri, 1998) that actively refers to what is hidden by these traces, to a lacuna, an absence (Agamben, 1998; Quattrone, 2002). In the case of an accounting inscription, for instance, it can be conceived not only as a trace of a coherent system of accountability inspired by a uniform rationale, but also as the result of a complex work of mediation, which is performed thanks to the action exerted by this sign (as illustrated by Quattrone, 2004, in relation to the Jesuit Order). Thus, in addition to highlighting this issue of stability in terms of notions of centres, we need to explore how these various processes and practices of mediation create difference and diversity, i.e. many Spacings, Timings and Organizings.

Fabbri (1998: 36–7) explores how it is possible that inscriptions can coexist as the generators of both heterogeneity and stability, through the insertion of passions into the study of signs. As noted by Fabbri (1998: 24), a poem such as the *Odyssey* does not acquire sense because of the sum of the words or phrases it contains. Rather, it does so thanks to a semantic articulation that is narrative in kind. Thus, the *Odyssey* does not refer to an external (social or individual) meaning as this is constructed thanks to the articulation of words that from semiotic actants become actors, personages. In this sense, signs (and words), rather than being attempts to represent something (a referral to something that is
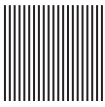
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external to them), or even residual attempts to refer to an absence, are first and foremost *actions*. If an inscription is purged of the residual referral to the world, and it is conceived of as an action itself, then the possibility for heterogeneity proliferates. Thus it happens, for instance, that the function of an account changes depending on the spatio-temporal framework it helps to construct (the narrative; Quattrone and Hopper, in press), or that calculations may even have opposite meanings in different action nets (Czarniawska, in this issue). Signs (and inscriptions) are thus *acts of engagement*[11] and, as actions, they can also become a broader category that could theoretically include any kind of communication device, from speech acts (see Cooren and Fairhust, in this issue) to body signs, and even silences and absences (Fabbri, 1998; see also Kallinikos, 1995).

If signs are to be thought as actions, or as *acts of engagement*, they have also to be investigated as *effects of engagement*, as actions which have effects on the Other and generate passions in it.[12] This is the second step in what Fabbri (1998) defines as a 'semiotic turn'. Thus, whereas the process of making references (as a relational issue with the absence *of* the Other) still represents an ontological residue, an ethical dimension of knowledge is opened up by focusing on the influence these signs may have *on* the Other (Lévinas, 2002; Greimas, 1983). Passions have conventionally been removed from the study of organizations (as has spirituality; Calás and Smircich, 2003). Reintroducing these into the frame (even in areas such as accounting!) will both facilitate a move away from a view of knowledge as either objective representation or social construction and enable a focus upon the complex processes of fabrication and negotiation (Latour, 1999b). This also relates to Thrift's comments (in this issue) with respect to Tardean sociology. In particular, he highlights the need to look down at the multiplicity and complexity associated with each 'thing' to examine the properties that things, such as signs, 'have'. These enable relations and engagements with the Other, of which they are part (Latour, 2002).

An exploration of the role or inscriptions as acts and effects of engagements helps to address some of the issues raised within this Introduction and the papers hosted in this special issue. However, it also opens up further lines of reflection and problems; some of these will be illustrated in the following and concluding sections in relation to the issue of organizing and organizations.

Spacing, Timing and Organizing: What Is Left of Organizations?

Let us now explore the interplay between heterogeneity and stability in relation to issues of organizing. In this respect Callon and Law (2004) stress the importance of looking at processes and this is further expounded by Niels Viggo Hansen (in this issue). In addition to tracing the steps that have led to gaining an awareness of the constructed nature of space

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and time (the loss of cosmological innocence), he examines the issue of Spacing and Timing as process, and calls for more investment in the development of a philosophy of processes. Although not detracting from the importance of process, Keith Hoskin (in the Foreword to this issue) is unconvinced about the inevitable and prevailing drift towards a theory of processes and a philosophy of becoming. For instance, the notion of process entails an implicit metaphor of movement and change—from one condition in space and time to another (see Quattrone and Hopper, 2001). Process can thus be seen as relying on and constructing a specific spatio-temporal frame and therefore may not fully address the problems of Spacing, Timing and Organizing we have discussed above.
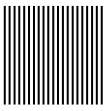
For Hoskin, we need to address this issue by looking at the ways in which 'the invention of management' allows the sharing and the proliferation of spacings and timings. We might ask: Is there such a thing, be it a heuristic category (e.g. the concept of organization) or an empirical phenomenon (e.g. an organizational practice), that shows a degree of sameness, a generic character in different instances and can therefore be useful in making sense of the world around us? The way in which this question is formulated already smells of space and time, rather than of Spacing and Timing, because the 'different instances' relate to different spatio-temporal coordinates. However, the issue is crucial as, in broader terms, it relates to entities and their relation with Spacing and Timing as we have described so far. What follows seeks not to solve this dilemma but merely to explore these issues and possible routes for addressing such problems.

To speak of Spacing, Timing and Organizing requires an understanding of what is meant by 'organization' and 'organizational', and whether there is any space and time left for these heuristics in this drift towards the proliferation of hybrids of all sorts. In this respect, classifying (a form of spatializing and temporalizing) is strongly related to identity making and to the making[13] of an entity (Bowker and Star, 1999: 28). However, there are no stable classifications and thus no stable (id)-entities. This is why, in an era of post-s (post-structuralism, post-modernism, etc.), thoughts become 'weak' (Vattimo, 1983), objects require the prefix 'quasi-' (Latour, 1991) or become 'boundary' (Star and Griesemer, 1989), and the identity 'is routinely characterised as multiple, fragmented, and fluid' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 6). Thus, one wonders why it should be conceptualized as identity at all and it raises the question: should one go 'beyond' it?

As noted by Thrift in the Afterword to this issue, the work of the sociologist Gabriel Tarde provides some interesting contributions to this debate by avoiding a reliance on 'being',[14] and replacing this with a focus on having, in order to open up possibilities:

> So far, all of philosophy has been founded on the verb To be, whose definition seemed to have been the Rosetta's stone [sic] to be discovered. One may say that, if only philosophy had been founded on the verb To

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have, many sterile discussions, many slowdown[s] of the mind, would have been avoided. From this principle 'I am', it is impossible to deduce any other existence than mine, in spite of all the subtleties of the world. But affirm first this postulate: 'I have' as the basic fact, and then the had as well as the having are given at the same time as inseparable. (Tarde, [1899] 1999: 86; quoted in Latour, 2002)

These critiques are quite crucial for organization studies: 'the problem, of course, is to identify the key practices that can allow organizations to minimally cohere in space and minimally reproduce in time such that they are still deserving of the name' (Thrift, in this issue). Along with this 'empirical' problem there is also a philosophical one that cannot be solved with a complete shift either towards the idea of process (see Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) or to the idea of practice (see the critique by Vann and Bowker, 2001). For instance, although Niels Viggo Hansen (in this issue) seeks to trace the loss of cosmological innocence and calls for a philosophy of processes to be further developed, such a drift towards a philosophy of becoming may fail to account for where and when this process happens, leaving the Spacing and Timing issue still unsolved.

If the shift from essence to properties called for by Tarde and recalled by Latour solves a series of issues (e.g. the status of non-humans in actor-network theory; Latour, 2002), and our conception of inscription as acts and effects of engagement goes in this direction, it is also true that in the shift from '*I am*' to '*I have*' the '*I*' is still there.

Something analogous to what we witnessed for the term inscription could probably happen for the (id-)entity of organizations and organizational practices. As noted by Fabbri (1998: 21), following St Augustine, if there are seven signs in a phrase then the phrase is divisible into seven signs; but the phrase too is a sign, so how many signs is a phase made of? And, more importantly, what is the size of the signs? This seems a crucial issue for organizational scholars for when is an organization an organization and not a series of events; when is an action net an action net (see Czarniawska in this issue) and not simply a piece of string between two knots (as noted by one of the referees)?

So what is left of organizations? Some readers will be surprised when we declare that organizations are 'facts'. This is not in the common understanding of a thing existing out there but in a sense that recovers the Latin etymology of the noun, since one of the sources of the word 'fact' is the verb *facere* ('to make'). The word 'fact' also interestingly shares the etymology of the word 'effect' (from *ex facere*) and highlights the power of fact in affecting and influencing (from *ad facere*) the Other. So for instance, when Peter Dobers and Lars Strannegård describe the travels of the Cocoon in their paper in this issue, they clearly refer to how this work can be read as a text that engages the Other much beyond the intention of the artist: paradoxically, an instrument for achieving

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isolation results in an artefact that acts, engages and has effects and also affects the Other.
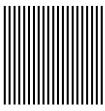
Although the actual (rather than the simply factual) connotation of the word 'fact' has been lost in the English language, it is still quite alive (although every day less and less) in other Latin-based languages (e.g. Italian). In this sense, there is nothing less factual than a 'fact', for the fact always depends on those actions that are performed in order for it to exist, but also on the passions that each constructed fact is able to generate in the Other. Thus, in order for this new identity to exist, it always needs to be made, accomplished, achieved (as in what was said concerning 'love' in the epigraph to this Introduction).

If we want to transpose this to the idea of organization, then there is no *a priori* organization (and we would argue not even *a posteriori* in some discrete and independent entity existing in one space–time framework). Issues such as dimension and size depend on various acts of engagement, 'affects' and 'effects'. This is why we believe that the notion of action net defined by Czarniawska in her paper in this issue is an important concept to consider, especially in relation to how action nets as 'empty boxes' become filled and to what extent. Why are some boxes more 'full' than others? Under what conditions do organizations emerge and organizings take place?

This *facere* that action nets are full of is as complex as the one we witnessed for the term 'inscription'. If inscriptions generate passions, we may say that organizations generate *hope*. Like the Cocoon, which became famous because it promised isolation (and then was seen to fail in this aim), we are constantly surrounded by management practices that solicit our hope (e.g. to solve a cost calculation issue, as for Activity Based Costing, or a communication and control issue, as for Enterprise Resource Planning Systems; or to achieve a sense of order and control in terms of mental health care). In this sense, one of the biggest powers that the 'Other' exerts upon ourselves is that of letting us hope (Fabbri, 1998: 78, based on Heidegger). It is true that power is not something that a dictator, a manager or the Pope *has* (Latour, 1986: 264ff). For it lies not in the actions that such people perform alone, but in those performed by all (including others). Hope (of solving a problem, of getting power, of making money, of salvation) can also be seen to play a great role in organizing practices—in the 'Other' engaging and creating these others. And, again quoting Latour (1997: 180), '[i]f other entities are necessary for our existence (and surprising at that), then times and spaces will proliferate'.

Conclusions

In conclusion, rather than focusing on space and time as existing in fixed and independent form, we have sought to explore a range of issues

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relating to the creation and assemblage of Spacing(s), Timing(s) and Acting(s). This involves understanding them with regard to the process of mediation and negotiation, the context of shifting (a shift in space and in time and also a shift in actant), and the issues of alterity, absence/presence, engagement and organizing. However, when considering the issue of presence and Other it is important to clarify that, rather than attempting to make everything present, our aim has been to search out new ways of conceptualizing issues of ordering and organizing, which are aware (and respectful) of the absence/presence of the Other. This requires the development of alternative vocabularies and approaches to understanding and developing the concepts of Spacing and Timing, such as how we account for the ways in which some practices and inscriptions have various, concurrent and competing characters and rationales.

We therefore need to examine the proliferation, circulation and shifting of some inscriptions and practices and not others. This includes the ways in which certain inscriptions maintain a sense of 'credibility' and 'rigidity' within particular contexts or applications (but possibly not all), whereas others may not. Thus, by exploring the creation and interweaving of Spacings, Timings and Actings, we can begin to examine the constitution of 'credibility' and the issue of what 'counts' and for whom in relation to the politics of distribution and the acts and effects of engagement. Spacing and Timing thus forces us to focus on the specifics of practice and the 'gravity' of unfolding[15] events.
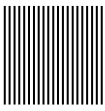
Finally, we have also sought to examine the space and time left for organizations within such an analysis. One approach involves studying them in terms of engagement, passions and hope. This means focusing on the passions and hope that the Other, be it a human or a non-human, instils in us. It means focusing on acts and effects of engagements which define action nets. In other words, in a strange and interesting relationship, the creation of 'organization as entity' is linked to the construction of our own id-entity. For instance and as a hyperbole, it is one thing to research a multinational corporation with the aim of selling our acquired expertise as consultants (as we play a role in defining the particular action net we seek to engage with) and another to research the same corporation to illustrate forms of exploitation of third world resources. We would be speaking of two different researchers, of two different identities and, indeed, of two different organizations (even though the corporation may have the same legal entity). An organization is a constant organizing in the same sense that our identities rely on the action nets with which they engage and the organizations they give rise to. It seems to us that issues of Spacing and Timing are thus crucial ethical organizing issues, because acts and effects of engagement have a heterological dimension that requires further exploration in organization studies.

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Notes

1   Clearly space and time have been conceptualized in many ways. These include work in a variety of areas, such as: space/time compression (Giddens, 1984, 1991); phenomenology (Heidegger, [1927] 1962; Mead, [1932] 1959; Adam, 1990); social psychology/social construction (Weick, 1979; Berger and Luckman, 1967); managerial perspectives—globalization and post-industrialization (e.g. Chandler, 1990; Bell, 1974; Clark, 1985; Boisot, 1998); and rhythmicity—'natural' time (Adam, 1995), and more philosophical reviews in relation to organizing (see, for instance, Rämö's paper in this issue; Crang and Thrift, 2001; Le Poidevin and MacBeath, 1993).

2   For Deleuze (1994) the processes associated with producing 'order' involve the creation of a space and a time that are peculiar to that which is actualized. Thus, rather than treating time and space as existing in universal and *a priori* forms, they should be understood as components in the production of variation and difference. In addition, difference and repetition do not merely relate to concepts of resemblance, equivalence, sameness and identity, and thus difference should not be understood merely as a factor of negation of negativity.

3   It is also important to note that when Isabelle Stengers talks of patience she is referring to a characteristic associated with non-humans as well as with humans.

4   Take the case of certain forms of accounting calculations (e.g. Briers and Chua, 2001; Jones and Dugdale, 2002; Miller and Napier, 1993; Quattrone, in press), or the implementations of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems (Quattrone and Hopper, in press; Scott and Wagner, 2003).

5   In addition, the creation of orderings relates to the multiplicity of orders and the problematic of knowing (such as the problematic assumption that everything can be viewed and known from one central place; see Law, 1997).

6   It is possible to envisage many interactions weaving together from many different times, places and types of material (e.g. the laboratory, the doves flying in the sky, the glass plate, the sight and a clock mechanism, the practices and artefacts relating to the photo development process, as well as Marey himself). Each of these entities has its own spacings, timings and actings, and each assemblage requires a wealth of translations with regard to the coming together of these multiplicities (Latour, 1997).

7   See Power's (1994, 1997) discussion of the 'audit society' to understand these issues in the context of audits, value for money, quality and a shift in trust from professionals to documentary evidence. Also see Latour's (1997) discussion of the emphasis on a 'risk' free society, where there is a drive towards making sure nothing unanticipated happens, everything is regulated and

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runs to schedule, and constancy is maintained. This drive may enable trains to run 'on time', etc., but we also need to consider the consequences and other acts of engagement related to such a crusade.

8   McLean and Hoskin (1998); Bloomfield and McLean (2004).

9   Bloomfield and McLean (1995).

10 With respect to translations Eco (2003) notes that, although some words can be translated in many different ways, some translations appear more 'correct' than others.

11 We have chosen to replace Fabbri's reference to 'acts of sense' with 'acts of engagement', so as to avoid the problematic connotations associated with the term 'sense'. Engagement also provides more of an idea of action, construction and negotiation with regard to such a process.

12 An example that assists in clarifying this issue relates to a quote in a recent article in *The Independent* (Arthur, 2004): 'everyone knows the definition of the shortest interval of known time. It's the period between the lights going green on a Paris intersection and the second car in the queue starting to hoot. Now the scientists have come up with a word for it—an "attosecond", or one billion billionth of a second.' This seems to confirm Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise in which any spatialized time interval, however infinitesimal (such as the attosecond), can always be divided further, ad infinitum. However, this now infinitely small division of time still cannot compete (as Achilles could not with the Tortoise) with the 'interval between the light going green on a Paris intersection and the second car in the queue starting to hoot' (i.e. the subjective perception of the sign that is the 'green'). Here again, we are referred to something that is absent from the sign, the person in the car, and the subjective imagination of the person evoked by the sign itself. This interesting loop between objectivity and subjectivity collapses in this new semiotic way of looking at traffic lights. We wish to thank Keith Hoskin for bringing this example to our attention.

13 For Latour (2003), a shift to the concept of 'making' assists in diverting attention from the 'makers' (i.e. from human actors or masters fully in control) and to the work and materials involved. Thus, learning to be responsive to the unexpected qualities and virtualities becomes important for engineers and relates to chance encounters with practical solutions. This concept of virtualities comes from the work of Deleuze and has been developed by Stengers and further by Latour (1997). Whereas virtualities relate to the many and possibly unidentified differences, for Latour 'potentiality is the realisation "in time" of what was already there in potentia' (1997: 186). This raises the question of 'whether time is the realization of potentialities, or if it emerges from the eliciting, the eduction of virtualities, of surprising differences'. However, in order to examine such a question we need to explore this in terms of otherness (e.g. with regard to the quality of connections with other actants, such as the intensity). Furthermore, we need to focus on how the apparent erasure of time and practice by turning virtualities into potentialities can produce a sense of timelessness and the associated 'forgetting' of all the work and mediation underlying such a move.

14 Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of 'rhizome' also tries to avoid this focus on being and the idea of beginnings and endings by shifting the

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emphasis to conjunctions (i.e. and, and, and . . .) in terms of additions and diversity, rather than being and centredness.

15   We are grateful to Nigel Thrift for stressing the importance of this aspect.

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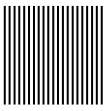
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Geoff Jones is an Honorary Fellow of the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. He is an independent researcher with particular interests in historical and cultural geography, social history and economic sociology. **Address:** Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP, UK.
[email: geoff.jones@sbs.ox.ac.uk]

Chris McLean is a lecturer within the Manchester School of Management. Her teaching and research interests cover the relationship between technical artefacts and social relations, with particular reference to the role of information systems within organizations. Additionally, she has a keen interest in the areas of organizational theory, agency, and notions of space and time. **Address:** School of Management, UMIST, PO Box 88, Manchester M60 1QD, UK.
[email: chris.mclean@umist.ac.uk]

Paolo Quattrone is Lecturer in Management Studies at the University of Oxford (Saïd Business School, in association with Christ Church). He is also associated with the Department of Business and Social Studies of the University of Siena thanks to the 'Rientro dei Cervelli' programme of the Italian Ministry of Education. His current research examines how various information technologies seek to construct a specific visibility for human actions and how this construction is crucial in defining the nature and functioning of accounting. His research spans contemporary to historical analysis in various organizational settings, for example multinational corporations, religious entities such as the Society of Jesus of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the university. **Address:** Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP, UK.
[email: paolo.quattrone@sbs.ox.ac.uk]

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