Being followed by an organization:

A *hauntological* perspective on organizational ethnography

Frédérik Matte
University of Ottawa
Fmatt3@uottawa.ca

Nicolas Bencherki
TÉLUQ Montréal
Nicolas.bencherki@teluq.ca

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Introduction

This chapter puts forward a vision of organizational ethnography in response to challenges we met while analyzing data from a longitudinal research project of the humanitarian organization Médecins sans frontières/Doctors Without Borders (also referred to as ''MSF''). This vision assumes that MSF's actions and those of its workers seek to substantiate the organization's principles of independence, neutrality and rigor in medical practice (Vallaeys, 2004). In each context where MSF operates, its ideal to provide free access to medical care for people in need must be materialized by its logistical apparatus and its many representatives who coordinate the deployment of aid and negotiate a 'humanitarian space' (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010). In other words, the organization's principles and ideals are operative and can make a difference because they are deployed through 'effects of presence' (Cooren, 2016): their presence is felt in what MSF members do in the name of their organization.

With this idea in mind, we will develop in this chapter what we propose to call a *hauntological* perspective to organizational research. It consists in the idea that we, researchers, do not only follow an organization, but we are also followed by its ghostly effects of presence (Derrida, 1999). We will show that it is through the researcher's embodied experience of the organization's haunting that its agency and its history are made relevant and become observable. More specifically, we suggest that a hautological perspective enables the researcher to account not only for what is present and can be experienced – space, relations or language, just like a phenomenological lens would suggests – but also for anything that *affects* the researcher and

his/her data collection, even if the object of this affection is absent, intangible, out of sight, or even imagined. As Anderson (2009) notes:

> … it is the very ambiguity of affective atmospheres – between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite – that enable us to reflect on affective experience as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity (p. 77)

In other words, and just like a ghost or a memory that we might not be able to get rid of, a hautological perspective gives those shadows and traces more space to fully blossom by letting any sensations, intuitions, atmospheres or recollections a chance to re-emerge and re-create a certain reality for the researcher they follow. Hence, we agree that "the traces of the old cannot be destroyed but remain as sedimentary deposits" (Barrett, 1993, p. 249) and act as a "sort of machine" that self-replicates by acting upon us (Derrida, 1990). This hauntological perspective, therefore, requires that we accept our partial passivity as researchers.

> *It all started with a jolly confusion as I went through the custom process at the capital's airport, on a gray morning of July; it ended a month later, as I was tired down to my bones. Still, I feel that I contributed, slightly, to alleviate the suffering caused by the chaos of an ongoing war. Between the mundane, or even exciting, event of arriving into a new country – albeit at war – and the strange state of mind where I find myself today, at the juncture of despair and fulfilment, I feel that I encountered a collection of what could be called 'organizational things' amidst the apparent disorganization of war. Over the last 30 days, those things materialized at the Médecins sans frontières (MSF) mission, located in an UN-guarded Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp.*
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> *These things were organizational in nature, because they had effects on my worldview and shaped, constituted and made a difference in the way I reflected on the meaning of this organization. In a sense, they also brought me into existence during these 30 days, as they made me do particular things, think in specific ways, relate to others through defined rituals. I was, so to speak, being followed by those things of various ontological kinds. Throughout my presence in South Soudan, I was affected by them, at the confluence of matters, artefacts, relations, feelings, ideas, thoughts and memories. They did something to me, created a world for me, made me be part of an organization, and provided me with a unique worldview and experience.*
>
> *The rainy season's endless supply of mud that covered not only my gumboots but also all of my clothes. The tanks and the AK-47 strategically positioned to guard the camp from possible threats. The countless rumours about imminent attacks from rebels. The*

patient that had to be quickly moved from the camp to the hospital. The impromptu meeting during which the head of mission hastily announced that the organization was now in code "red." The frightening stray dogs that surrounded the compound. It all mattered. I was being followed by this organization; and as it followed me, it was getting to know me.

(Field notes from Malakal, South Sudan, August 2014)

Whoever has worked in an unstable, volatile or even violent environment may have experienced the overwhelming feeling of being enveloped and captured by their organization (Spencer, 2014). Even in more ordinary settings, any person who is *thrown*, integrated, or incorporated into an organization may have the feeling of being exceeded or surpassed by it. Wherever we go, it seems, the organization follows us, haunts us (Bencherki & Cooren, 2011; Cooren, 2009): like the devotee who is inhabited by a spirit, organizational members and researchers are made to do things by the organization they belong to and that possesses them in return. Their values creep into our hearts, their procedures guide our actions, their symbols adorn our clothes, their technologies mediate our understanding of the world. Organizations transform workers, volunteers and reserchers, and it is as they undergo this transformation that these people know their organization the most intimately.

Being haunted or followed, or even hunted or chased by an entity, an object or an organization is not extraordinary. We all experience on a daily basis a strange feeling, a mental or kinesthetic memory, a smell that we recognize, a fear whose origins we have forgotten, and other sensations that help or hinder our navigation across our organization's social and physical structure. Our body may even be consumed or eaten up by the organization, as in the case of workaholics and burnouts. When we belong to an organization, it brands our body, it marks our brain, our skin, with the signs of its possession, and these are the traces of its haunting.

The world 'throws' at us bundles of these traces that make-up situations where we are 'in varying degrees, puzzled as to what to do and how to respond' (Tsoukas, 2013, p. 60). Wheater in a war context or in mundane work, as an employee or as a researcher, our encounters with these ghosts of organizatity beg the question of *how we relate* to the objects, situations, and beings through which they make their presence felt even though they are apparently absent. Reflecting on this question, we suggest, provides us – researchers – with a sure methodological tool to grasp the very existence of organizations: our body, and the way it serves as a surface on which organizations leave their traces, is ultimately our only tool to account for them.

The hauntological extension of organizational ethnography

The agricultural metaphors of *gathering* and *collecting* data reinforce the image of bountiful data, well delimited and waiting to be picked up by the researcher. Some fruits may be harder to find or to extract, but in the end, with the right strategy, the researcher will prevail at collecting what s/he wants. In other words, the researcher is *active* in picking up *passive* data whose *presence* is known in advance or discovered through participation in the field. Even "participant" observation supposes activity on the researcher's part, and professional distance from the "natives." To a large part, this distance is attributable to excessive precautions to safeguard from the risk of being perceived as not sufficiently scientific, or of merely "evoking" memories rather than proving anything, a precaution shared with autoethnographers (Anderson, 2006; Boyle & Parry, 2007; Richardson & Lockridge, 1998).

In contrast, a hauntological view of ethnography necessitates acknowledging that the object of our research, the organization, is active and engages us. Far from being a 'mere' reification (Cooren, 2010), this stance takes seriously the details of how we encounter organizations in our daily work and life. To make this argument, we embrace the methodological

and ontological implications of a relational and processual view of organization and organizing

(Cooper, 2005; Cooren, 2010; Emirbayer, 1997). Relationality and processuality emphasize that

organizations exist through the concrete practices through which people get organized, that is, try

to coordinate their activities in order to accomplish the task at hand (Gherardi, 2009). Besides

human actors, though, we must also remain open to the participation of artefacts, principles, and

other materializations of the organization (Cooren, 2006).

Accordingly, and following Langley and Tsoukas' (2016) advice regarding the empirical

approaches to study processes, researchers must 'capture and express the experience of

temporality, flow, activity and emergence in concrete terms' (p. 10). However, we argue for a

radical departure from conventional views of research that present the investigator as capturing

organizational reality through notes, photographs and other recordings, before expressing them

through writing (see Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009). Instead, we propose to ask

ourselves, as researchers in the social sciences: what if we *were captured and expressed* too, in a

more *passive* or submissive way, by the very experience of temporality or flow that gives rise to

organizations?

To encapsulate this reverted posture to the study of organization – pleading for the

researcher's *sub-mission* to the organization's various incarnations – we put forward the

expression 'being followed.' This expression translates our rejection of conventional dualities in

social science research (e.g. researcher/object of research; passive/active; absent/present), a

rejection that allows for a de-centering of the researcher as a subject. In other words, this

reflexive stance casts off common fantasies that consist of positioning the active researcher as

studying passive subjects. Instead, it stresses that the researcher's active knowledge production is

possible precisely because s/he is also passively being followed by the organization, and getting

to be known by it. Foregoing the conventional distinction between presence and absence also

makes the questions about the researcher's participation in the field, or about the reality of the phenomenon under study redundant. As we will show, both presence and absence are instrumental in organizational research, which explains why organizations can be said to have a spectral presence.

Thus, the researcher's role becomes a more passive one: s/he discovers the organization as s/he becomes *passionate* about it, or is *animated* by its materializations (Cooren, 2010). As Van Vuuren & Cooren (2010) suggest about someone's (say, a researcher's) attitude or posture:

> Passions, impulses, and addictions indeed constitute reasons for specific behaviours or conduct, but as with any reasoning they can, in extreme forms, come to decimate all the others. In these specific cases, people can actually be said to lose agency to the extent that other parts of what is supposed to constitute their self do not seem to make a difference anymore: they appear to be possessed, alienated, taken over, consumed, devoured by something, as many terms that precisely indicate a very strong possession, which can lead to a complete annihilation of what is supposed to be their persona. (p. 94)

Similarly, we wish to draw attention to, and learn from, the (communication) practices of researchers as they are recursively *affected* by the situations they help produce and materialize through their research accounts. What matters and what counts for the organization, but also for the researcher, must be discursively and materially embodied in order to be considered as making a difference (Martine & Cooren, 2016), and such embodiment sometimes literally takes place within the researcher's body or in people and things s/he interacts with.

Ghosts speak through a medium, and organizational members or researchers serve the same purpose. They say, write, or do things in the name of rules, procedures, or other people, which always implies an act of re-presentation, of making present those who would otherwise be absent. It is when the member or the researcher's body is perceived as being possessed by the organization, when what the person says, writes or does is understood as not theirs – for instance when it is not the editor, but "the journal" that rejects or accepts a paper – that the situation is

recognized as 'organizational' and becomes legible (Derrida, 1990). However, this act of re-presentation may fail, as it is "always haunted by the risk of a 'mis-communication'" (Cooren, 2012).

Hauntology emphasizes the researcher's (and other people's) body, face, and brain as projection screens on which the organization becomes visible (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Flaxman, 2000). From a practical standpoint, hauntology aligns with calls for an "embedded ethnography," which implies not only the researcher's presence in the field, but also a posture to live the experience to its fullest (Atkinson, 2014). Indeed, similarly to what we propose, a fully embedded ethnographic posture also sees the researcher's own body as an instrument. As Spencer (2014) argues, speaking of a fighting club: "This insider position not only allows for a documentation of the practices related to participation in combat sports and martial arts, but also the sensory experiences that dominate the crafting of the fighter's body" (p. 236). The researcher's experience therefore combines the experiencing subject and the experienced object into "an integral relational unity" (Bjorkeng, Carlsen and Rhodes, 2014, p. 326). Both in the field and in the writing of ethnography, as Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) note, such an approach reframes the "boundaries and relations between Self and Other(s), Actor and Acted-Upon, Author and Story." (p. 59).

More than just adding the body to the ethnographer's toolbox, though, a hauntological approach calls for a form of abandonment, a willingness to switch from *doing ethnography* to *being ethnographed.* This means that, if the researcher writes" organizational ethnographies, the organization also "writes itself" in her or him. This writing, as we will propose later, *articulates* the many traces of the organization that the ethnographer encounters, and the body is the space where this articulation occurs.

Accordingly, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to the analysis of daily situations where the first author of this chapter was acting both as a humanitarian worker for *Médecins sans frontières (*MSF*)* and as a researcher, gathering data through his everyday participation. A close examination of the scenes reveals that the first author discovered the agency of both materiality and spectrality as they assailed him, frustrated him, haunted him, and otherwise made themselves known to him as he attempted to carry out his ordinary work in an extraordinary setting. These (im)material incarnations mattered to him because they shaped, affected, influenced and channeled both relations and actions, and constituted the resources with which it was possible to get organized.

After illustrating the way organizational matters and materializations can be studied by mobilizing a hauntological perspective to analyze empirical scenes gathered by the first author during his mission in South Sudan, we propose to show how such a perspective leads to a revision of taken-for-granted assumptions in organizational research. By grounding this proposal in an *aporetical* vision of communication (Derrida, 1990), oscillating between words and writings, the said and the untellable, constraints and freedom, machinery and craftsmanship, we revisit the notions of presence and absence, and activity and passivity in research. This leads in turn to redefine action, which is the main object of study in organizational research, as a *situated* performance. We then show how a hauntological perspective contributes to the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) research tradition, and to organizational ethnography more generally, as it suggests a reversal from doing ethnography to accepting to be ethnographed.

Doing ethnography

For the past nine years as a volunteer and as a researcher with the organization, the first author was able to complete a series of fieldworks that allowed him to observe MSF workers as

well as to participate to the medical activities during several missions around the world (i.e., The

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Sri Lanka, Jordan, South Sudan, Swaziland,

Mozambique, Djibouti, Kenya and Haiti). To do so, he studied MSF workers in charge of

missions in their daily (inter)actions, trying to discover "what is happening here" (Snow et al.,

2003). He collected data by using a video-shadowing method (Björk-Willén, 2007; Lomax &

Casey, 1998; Meunier & Vasquez, 2008), which consists of following someone or a group of

people and recording their daily activities with a video camera.

Once each fieldwork was completed, these recordings, which culminated of more than

seventy hours of footage, were transcribed in details. Numerous data analysis sessions were

completed in order to understand how MSF workers worked and what appeared to matter to

them. A number of papers and book chapters have been published as a result of these studies and

data analysis sessions (see Bencherki, Matte & Pelletier, 2016; Cooren et al. 2013; Cooren,

Brummans & Charrieras, 2008; Cooren & Matte, 2010). With this established ethnographic

method, we were able to identify, among the many hours of videos recorded, specific types of

preoccupations, practices, or ways of talking that appeared to define what could be called MSF

members' typical discourse and conducts.

However, for the purpose of this chapter, we opted to "turn around" this more traditional

method by incorporating the idea that the first author had also been followed by the organization.

This desire to shift methods comes from our annoyances with the flattening effect of our own

ethnographic writing when following conventional method. In our previous research, we had the

tendency to evacuate the anguish, the feeling of emergency and the overwhelming sentiment that

the first author experience while following MSF in the field. As we were writing papers using

state-of-the-art methods, we were in fact continuously meditating over an array of recollections

and vivid memories that came from the first author's experience during his MSF mission, and

that affected the second author through our numerous conversations and longstanding friendship. To do justice to MSF staff's work and to our own experience, we sought a manner of accounting for the many aspects from the field that are left out of more traditional ethnographic writing.

Echoing Derrida's concept of *hauntology*, it seems that "we have to learn to live with ghosts and be accountable to them" (Barad, 2013, p. 28). What we did, then, is turn our attention on those revenants: those "things" we had ignored so far, but had affected us over time and through space, both in our minds and with the help of tools – video-recordings for instance. Our project is to now analytically build on those aspects of the first author's embodied experience that had profoundly changed him, which kept returning to the point that we could not keep ignoring them (Czarniawska, 2007). Allies, roadblocks, information, mud, environment, tasks or uncertainties were among the co-creators of the organizational experiences and situations that marked him. As Helin, Hernes, Hjorth and Holt (2014) indicate: "every belonging to a situation is a participation in a field of potential (all the multiplicities that the situation holds together via its many relationships) and the event is the release of this potential into a becoming" (p. 4)

In order to illustrate such a proposition, we will focus our attention on a specific field study at MSF that the first author did during the summer of 2014 in the war-torn country of South Sudan and where he volunteered as a communication officer. This position gave him the opportunity to access an insider's perspective on the way his colleagues and himself tried to get organized during this intense mission. For one month, the first author lived alongside about 40 other international volunteers inside the displaced refugee camp of Malakal, in the highly unstable Upper Nile State. The camp was guarded by U.N. peacekeepers and amassed over 40,000 people since December 2013. In addition to the civil and ethnic war, the refugees had to put up with unbearable conditions inside the camp. In such an overwhelming situation, organizing or, more prosaically, attempts at "getting organized" (Taylor & Van Every, 2014),

were daily challenges. Learning about organizations from this "blooming, buzzing confusion," to borrow the words of William James (1907), may seem improbable; and yet the first author did, and it is this surprising feat that will occupy us in the next pages.

Being followed by *Médecins sans frontières* in South Sudan

The three vignettes told in the first person and presented below exemplify the spectral materializations that emerged from the field and that seemed to have made a difference in the first author's experience. When arriving at the customs desk, what should have been a relatively straightforward passport stamping process turned into a firsthand experience of the resilience of MSF's mission in South Sudan. Then later, while attending a meeting at the MSF compound, the coordinator of the mission changed the "threat code" from green to yellow, thus translating the mission's instability, an unsteadiness that was also materialized into the absence of toilet. Afterward and when visiting the bunker to get to know where to go in case of an attack, the strangeness of the situation came to life in the form of bugs and giants insects girating around a shaky lamppost.

At the customs in Juba

The signs that I expected to guide me through the rows leading to the customs office were nowhere to be seen. To find my way through, I resorted to the only strategy I could think of: I followed the people who looked like they had been there before. With such a folk stratagem, I had to rely on complete strangers to figure out the customs process, thus bizarrely feeling like I belonged among my makeshift peers. Once at the counter, I had to pay $100 in cash, using US banknotes no older than 2006, before handing over my passport for the officer to stamp it briskly. I had been through similar procedures countless times in various countries, but this time around, it took two hours for the officer to hand me back my passport. While it quickly became obvious

to me that something was wrong – everybody around me had swiftly gone through to the luggage

room – I nevertheless decided to wait for another 15 minutes before asking questions, so as not to

look overly anxious, irritated or impatient towards a representative of my host country. I was

particularly concerned that, since I was representing an organization, MSF, my irritation would

be attributed to it. My red t-shirt with a huge MSF logo was hard to miss, and I could not afford

to become hysterical only minutes after having set foot in the country. After what I estimated to

have been plenty of time, though, I decided to inquire about the "situation" to the officer,

especially since he was casually chatting with his colleagues. More so, it seemed that everyone

else on the plane had gotten their visa – and passport –back and had either left or were waiting for

their luggage at a stall located about three meters from where I was standing with two other MSF

colleagues.

　　　As a response to my inquiry, a young officer told me that the person responsible for

stamping the visas was now gone. The person in charge had left the airport for the day – it was

almost 5:00 pm – but it was not a problem according to him, because I only had to come back the

next morning in the early hours. Therefore, it meant that I had to leave my passport behind, and

venture into the capital city Juba without it, hoping I would get it back the next morning on time

to board onto another flight to our final destination in the countryside. To say the least, I was

stunned at the young officer's answer. After all, all the other passengers had had their passport

stamped without any apparent issue. I remained speechless at the face of such an absurdity. That

is when one of my more experienced MSF colleagues decided to intervene, as she understood

that if I could not get my passport back today, we might just never see it again.

　　　She argued to the officer that we had to take a flight the next morning to another

destination in the country, which did not make him flinch. After few minutes, she turned for help

to a prominent national staff member (a locally-hired MSF employee), who was responsible of

the organization's finances. In his turn, he argued with the officer, but did not seem to have any more success. The MSF national staff member, my more experienced colleague, and the officer left, made some phone calls, and reappeared about 20 minutes later to announce to my remaining colleague and I that the customs chief had returned and finally stamped our passports. Who they had called, and what they said to that person remains unknown to me. What was obvious, though, is that MSF had built good relationships with the authorities over the years, and I had just witnessed an example of the way these good relations were paying off. We managed to "muddle through" (Lindblom, 1959) our way to the MSF headquarters with our precious document in hand. We had been in the country for less that 4 hours, and I had already seen how we had to jump through organizational hoops to get our job done. The chaotic arrival made my attitude rapidly evolve from the more casual posture of a Westerner traveller to a focused mission state-of-mind volunteer. My previous experiences with MSF over the years - and the self-confidence that usually comes with it - had vanished even before lunchtime.

The compound

On an emergency mission such as the one in Malalak, our final destination, things go both fast and slow. My colleague seemed to be ready at all time for any situation that might come up, but their eagerness was slowed down by many roadblocks related to impracticable transportation, security issues, lack of material, shortage of workers, and so on. My MSF colleagues and I dealt on a daily basis with the misalignment between their desire for action and the many obstacles they faced. To do so, they had to adjust to the evolution of the flow of events, fast or slow, while at the same time attempting to implement and live up to the standards of heaps of MSF protocols and procedures and frameworks. If we let ourselves be carried by the events, we runned the risk of simply not doing our job, and turning the MSF mission into a meaningless group of

maladjusted foreigners, let MSF's values and norms fall through the cracks and, quite literally, get lost in the mud.

In Malakal in particular and in South Sudan in general, mud exemplified the hostility of the natural environment and the instability of the social context. Mud, especially in the rainy season, which usually occurs from June to October, was almost everywhere. Getting stuck became routine, and I pretty much gave up any hope of remaining clean for more than a few hours. The soil was slippery and unpredictable. Underneath that dirty sludge, my colleagues and I were trying to implement overflowing binders full of procedures and "best practices" that had to be put in place (and organized) in order for the project to fulfil its mission according to some basic standards, especially regarding security.

On one evening shorlty after my arrival to the IDP camp, the head of mission (HoM) addressed the MSF staff to announce that the security code had switched from "green" to "yellow" after a "credible" rumour circulated. A reliable MSF national staff member had informed the head of mission of a possible skirmish along the Nile River, a few miles away from our location. He had heard gunshots, and rushed to inform the HoM. At that moment, most of us were working on our laptops at the compound – there is almost nothing else to do besides working when you live in a displaced camp. All 40 MSF staff members were at the small and rack shamble camp, working, chatting, drinking, and eating. All were there because they *had* to be there: an MSF rule requires workers to stay inside the compound at night for security reasons (we were after all in a U.N. camp protected by peacekeepers from the war that tore apart the Upper Nile region).

The HoM called the meeting by suddenly raising her voice over the ambient noise. To get the forty of us to be quiet, she clapped her hands repeatedly, and asked us to gather around the tables at the center of the room. She then started the meeting by saying this:

1   Ok ehh (.5) today we had some news that there are (.) that made us decide to change the
2   security color. If you remember, yesterday was green. (inaudible) But yesterday night, there
3   was a small attack quite near here in an area that is called Jongley. You can see here on the
4   map ((showing the map and pinpointing the place she is referring to)). It's really at the
5   border. It's very very close. And so, all these people moved and came here to the camp
6   today seeking for a- for security.
7
8   There are rumours from Melut, Kodok town (a city located in the same state as Malakal)
9   that there was a possibility of an attack in Malakal tonight. From the information that we
10   have it's not likely. But it is likely that it will happen in the days to come. They say that
11   they have seen some soldiers crossing the river. (…) The thing that makes us think that not-
12   not- nothing big can happen is that all the other attacks, they came through here before
13   ((showing a specific area on the map)
14
15   But it's clear that they are rumours, they are movements and something will happen. It
16   doesn't mean it is going to be a mess but it means we are in a different color.
17
18   We think we will see some signs that things are going to be moving. There are rumours,
19   there are not big numbers but they can make a little bit of noise in Malakal city. We- we
20   think we will see indicators of people who are living in Malakal today to come here with
21   their families. So we are going to closely monitor what is going on. But here, we have
22   changed the color; we are not in a green color anymore. There are rumours, we change.

By declaring that "We are now in a yellow zone," she meant that the situation had changed and

that the rules would be stricter from that moment on. A green code meant that the situation was

tense but reasonably stable. A yellow code indicated a much higher probability of incident, and a

red code was the signal to begin evacuating all non-essential staff.

Through her declaration, the head of mission's speech marked our passage from a green to

a yellow world, transforming the MSF workers' reality, making it – I felt – at once clearer and

more ambiguous. By naming the situation, the head of mission very tangible the rules of the

game we would be playing from now on. However, besides this transformation, nothing had

really changed in the camp: the compound we lived in still looked like a crumbling bundle of

wood planks, lined up with huge tents; everybody still had to get their work done; the hospital

still admitted and treated patients; and the camp's refugees were still living in harsh conditions.

Nevertheless, one main thing had evolved according to the HoM and, by proxy, according to the

organisation: we were now closer to the surrounding war, and it seemed that security measures had to be put in place to address the situation. Abruptly, my MSF colleagues and I were thrown into a sort of hyper-reality, a new "yellow code atmosphere" on top of the "green" world we inhabited: everything continued to look exactly the same, reliably similar, and yet somehow it now felt untrustworthy and more complex.

The bunker

Following the procedures that came into effect with the instauration of the new yellow code world just seconds ago, an expedition was organized to visit a nearby bunker, where we were supposed to hide in case of an attack. Of course, the bunker already existed before the HoM's declaration, but it just sat there, idle, waiting for nothing in particular. However, after her announcement, the bunker became a little more present, acting as an important piece of this unreliable situation, adding its sturdiness to our meagre compound. Many of us had never heard of it before, but now it was indispensable for our new environment, an environment that, as the yellow code vividly stated, could be disrupted by a possible attack. Armed with headlights and muddy gumboots, about ten MSF workers, including myself, left the compound for a guided tour of the bunker.

As we walked along the filthy path, the whole scene appeared surreal. Everyone made jokes, perhaps hoping to deflect the gravity of the situation. I made an ironic remark about how this was an entertaining Wednesday evening: visiting a bunker was far better than working or just doing nothing – the average evening activities at the compound. Once we reached the bunker, we discovered five poorly piled up containers on the verge of collapsing, lit with spotlights that attracted thousands of flies and an assortment of huge flying bugs. A colleague teasingly suggested that it was purposefully designed to grow insects, so that we could have food in case of

an assault. Another noted in the event of a mortar attack, our containers would certainly be destroyed within seconds, and us along with them, but we would be survived by the insects. Yet another colleague asked the head of mission which containers was intended for males and which for females, knowing we would laugh at such an insolent comment.

       We were living in a green world seconds ago and now we were all thrown in a yellow one with new rules and new codes of conduct. Even if the world did not totally change with this discursive intervention – I was still able to drink from my glass and my computer did not get any faster – it did also change a lot. I was less naïve about the place I was in, I was more aware of the sounds around me (the HoM talked about an attack where gunshots were heard). I also felt the need to know more about the context of this new code. For instance, where did that rumor come from, and was it reliable? The visit to the bunker seemed of the utmost importance in my eyes and, the next day, I was less preoccupied with my job and tasks. To be honest, a beer and a cigarette were more than welcome in the new yellow world. The new reality where I was embedded seemed to me more unsettling; an "event" could happen at any time, and I could be a collateral victim. I was still myself, but a self that was more basic, more human, with less of a clear organizational role. My identity as a volunteer had been tainted as the HoM changed our world. I was now more of an existential being, with the potential to be no more than flesh if an attack occurred. The reasons why I was there were more obscure – did I really choose to be here, to volunteer? My commitment was tested, although I was not thinking of leaving. In fact, my commitment was bolstered, as I had no option but to reflect on it, to ask myself if this harsh country and the new world I was entering were really meant for me.

A hauntological analysis

What does each of the scenes above teach us about the way the researcher gets to know the organization? The above scenes clarifies the way the straightforward epistemology that distinguishes an active researcher and a passive object of research is not sufficient to account for what actually goes on in the organizational field. The researcher certainly did not completely know what would be present once he got to South Sudan, and his "discoveries" on the field could hardly be described as ordinary *objets trouvés* (Okely, 1994) – arguably MSF's reality found the first author more than he found it. At no time did he have the kind of control conventional epistemologies assume the active researcher to possess. Yet, the researcher did accumulate data and learned a lot about MSF in South Sudan. He did so by reflecting on the way the organization and the reality he was experiencing affected him. He allowed himself to be acted upon, to be lugged around by an organization that exceeded him. In doing so, he witnessed what the organization and its materializations could *do* to him and others. It is therefore by acknowledging that he was not the only one being active that he could experience the difference the organization was making.

At the customs in Juba, the researcher immediately felt helpless and looked for signs to guide him through the airport, as one would expect in a Western airport (Knox, O'Doherty, Vurdubakis, & Westrup, 2008). He counted on those materializations to help him, but was let down; he then relied on his fellow passengers, whose embodied collective experience allowed him to finally find the customs counters. There, his red shirt with a huge MSF logo supposed to make present the researcher's organization, prevented him from being too insistent or impatient with the customs officer, who himself embodied the absurdity of a collapsing government. When things got out of hand, and he risked losing his passport, his only tangible identity marker as a

citizen from his home country, he saw how various MSF representatives jumped into action to sort out the situation. It is the researcher's powerlessness in a scary and confusing situation that allowed him to experience the way different organizations are articulated together – for instance MSF's good relations with the South Sudan authorities – and to gain a unique understanding of the way things work in the unstable country.

The compound similarly embedded the researcher in a nexus of materializations through which he experienced MSF, the camp, and their broader environment. The mud that covered his boots and clothes, and made his movements slippery and difficult, was a clear reminder of the harsh conditions under which MSF operateity mard and the displaced persons lived. The heap of wood that served as a compound and where all the staff was assembled, often with nothing to do, gave tangible reality to the organization's relative powerlessness in comparison to the challenges that surrounded it.

The role of the yellow code lends itself to a more detailed analysis of the way the new code materialized and affected the researcher's and his colleagues' reality. First, the HoM, in announcing the change of code, invoked a certain number of materializations that she presented as creating a new reality where the yellow code made sense. In other words, she was not the only saying that the new code had to be called.

One way to analyze the beginning of this intervention would consist of noting how the HoM stages a series of elements that are explicitly presented as having *made a difference* in their decision to change the security color. As it is always the case when a decision has to be justified, she thus implicitly shows that it is these elements that *made them make* this decision: (1) the fact that an attack took place, (2) the fact that this attack was "very very close" (line 5) and (3) the fact that this attack was serious enough to force people to flee and find refuge in the camp. It is

these three elements that, according to her, *made them* decide that the security color had to be

changed.

All the features of the situation, as depicted by the HoM, are thus supposed to *point to* or

call for the necessity to change the security color. This effect is reinforced, as we saw, by the

mobilization of the map, which is supposed to *support* what the HoM is saying. It is not only she

who says that the color should be changed; it is also what the map shows to the extent that the

latter apparently confirms the proximity of the danger. Interpreting the situation, as the HoM is

doing here, thus amounts to *making it say something*, in this case: the level of danger has to be

increased. This particular episode shows how the outlining of a situation in an extreme context

enables MSF to carry on its daily activities. In other words, the HoM *had to* address the situation,

what it, according to her reading, required, in order for the volunteers to change their mindset –

i.e. being more careful – and to allow them to continue on with their tasks (doctors to treat

patient, logisticians to build stuff, etc.). More so, it illustrates how the process of naming a

particular situation produces *ispo facto* a transformation by this very discursive performance

enacted by an organizational actor in a position of authority. A re-definition of the situation was

needed in order to allow volunteers to be on the same boat again and to update their evolving

world in order for them to make do with whatever they needed to do.

Another way to analyse this scene is to show how the official MSF discourse affected the

first author's reality, pushing him to translate the " green to yellow" speech into the metaphoric

term *disruption*. Disruption was the first word that came to mind when I was anxiously sitting at

the meeting. The word contains the same etymology as the term eruption, referring to the sudden

explosion of energy, material or any burst that is not expected or that is almost impossible to

contain. It gets out quickly, without notice, in a somehow chaotic manner and will

unquestionably create a new state of affairs. Yet, a disruption only burst once in a while I said to myself while still trying to listen carefully.

With this speech came a rupture, but a rupture that was somehow evolving continuously, sinuously chopped. In fact, this disjunction with "normality" - the old green world now disappearing under my eyes - was insidious and swiftly confronting my mental frameworks as well as my expectations (Weick, 1995). The sentence "to be in trouble" was the next thing that came to mind midway through the HoM speech, translating the place where one is thrown in, pushed or dislocated when experiencing it. It is actually quite disturbing a place, on the outskirts of the margin but also at the heart of the storm. Yet the mundane and the ordinary were omnipresent as well. In fact, it was quickly required on me: the natural necessities came back through the incessant filling of basic needs: I still needed to eat, drink, wash, sleep as well as go to the toilets, and if possible, immediately.

As I recall, MSF volunteers and I were based in a compound within a particular area of the displaced camp. The compound was basically made of four huge tents — where ten volunteers slept in each of them - and an open area covered by wooden rooftop for the kitchen, lunch tables and work office. But there was a minor "problem": no toilets were set up at the compound per se. It appears that the U.N. coordinating body - those in charge of coordinating INGO's within the camp - was unable to connect water to the toilet just beside the place. In fact, it was a running joke among volunteers, implying that the U.N wanted MSF to leave the camp - the organization was on their turf after all and the INGO became a bit of a burden to deal with - so they left MSF without proper toilets. This logistical situation was certainly more complex than it appears but the fact remained: MSF volunteers had to walk half a mile to go to the toilet or to take a shower.

In the middle of the night, among errant dogs surrounding the compound, with almost no light and a muddy path to cross, going to the toilet was a highly perilous experience. It really had to be urgent to go to say the least. More so, just before arriving to the toilets, you would see a tank and militaries armed with A.K. 47 from the U.N. guarding the outskirt of the camp. The first time I went, it seemed totally unreal and inappropriate. All these elements you had to deal with only to go to the toilet seemed fulsome and not required for such a basic requirement. But I could not fight it nor change it. It was there and from now on part of my daily routine. Going against such an improbable reality would have harmed my temporary ability to cope. However and after a couple of days of this regime - and an even more discomforting constipation for many of the volunteers, presumably due to this challenging set up: our bodies were marked by the hostile environment - you were nonetheless accustomed with such a complicated practice, allowing yourself to integrate the scenery into this hyper-reality without questioning it too often.

The evening of the HoM speech, the rain was pouring down and the pathway seemed like ten miles long. But otherwise, the notion of this yellow world sanked in subtly the days after, making the unusual vanish into normalcy, amid the many other challenges of being there 24/7. I remember seeing myself later during the mission, after almost a month of this regimen, confidently walking thought the muddy path with my toothbrush in my mouth and looking at the army tanks with an ironic smile: what a idiosyncratic way to go to the toilet, wheater this reality was on the verge of bursting into a yellow world or if I was soon be hiding in a bunker.

The bunker, and the experience of visiting it, was both reassuring and scary, and exemplified the organization's situation: an enormous mess. Murky trails with stray dogs, lamps with giant bugs, the rusty bunker in the dark, cynical and dubious humour, all of this, materialized the vulnerability of MSF's situation that the team had no option but to cope with.

Tentatively, a rule combines with the researcher's body and sets it in motion to walk with the others towards the bunker. The dismay he feels as he sees the sorry state of what should be his shelter, for its part, connects with a joke as his mouth utters funny words, and with the bugs that his eyes perceive. The mix was successful, and he became himself, provisionally, one of the organization's incarnations as he embodies the articulation of its many traces. He now experienced an embodied understanding, from the inside, of some aspects of MSF's South Sudan mission. If this had not happened, the fact is that he would have not only failed as a researcher to understand an external reality: it is also the organization that would not understand him, that would have failed to have a grasp on him. It would not possess him, move him, get him to act on its behalf, and the researcher would have remained just that, an outside guest, as opposed to becoming a member.

In the first author's case, though, these articulations did work. The days leading to the visit to the bunker revealed MSF as an emergency organization that certainly cares about workers' security but also faces risk and lives on the edge from time to time. The researcher felt the comradery, the shared burning desire to jump into action, the trust people have in each other, and the rules and protocols that held all of this together and that tried to keep everyone safe. But he also experienced the arbitrariness of a life in South Sudan as exemplified by the his experience at the customs, the concern that the rumors caused him, the feeling of helplessness triggered by the sight of the flimsy compound… The state of the bunker – alone in the middle of nowhere, clearly not well maintained, with the door half open – gave the researcher a strong sentiment of helplessness, as he understood that MSF's apparent preparedness was no match for the unstable and resourceless region.

How does a hauntological analysis change what we know about organizations?

Changing the epistemological attitude through which we study organizations to adopt a hauntological posture has implications over how we conceive several key notions underpinning organizational studies. Admitting, as Derrida proposes, that "we have to learn to live with ghosts and be accountable to them" (Barad, 2013, p. 28), entails questioning taken-for-granted premises of organizational research. First, it changes the way we think of presence and absence. The organization is not either present or absent; it may be abstract, evanescent, and yet it acts through its volunteers, logos, protocols, and so forth. These actions articulate together and make the organization present in the bodies of its members and in that of the researcher. Relatedly, making the duality between presence and absence problematic entails a new distribution of activity among the organization, its members, and the researcher.

Rather than assuming that either party is active while others are passive, the organization reveals itself precisely in the way action circulates between them. The work of organizing, then, reveals itself to correspond to an exercise in *articulating* action together. As we will show, the hauntological perspective extends current approaches to the study of the constitution of organizations, in particular what is known as the *ventriloquial* perspective, which also has roots in Derrida's work (Cooren, 2010); it also expands current views of ethnography by reverting the conventional role of the ethnographer.

Presence and absence

The suggestion that organizations are not either present or absent, but rather at once present and absent (Cooren et al., 2009) is not new in itself. Karl E. Weick (1979, 1995, 2010) has shown over the years that an organization partially epitomizes a mirage or a myth that always eludes us. An organization may be provisionally *present* and reified through its many

representatives and spokespersons, but it can also be *absent* when it does not influence or affect someone's worldview, or when it is not invoked by actors or otherwise made relevant. Understanding an organization therefore amounts to understanding its mode of presence (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Cooren, Brummans, & Charrieras, 2008). Doing so involves looking for the way people relate to it and how it materializes through various traces. While most organizations, most of the time, may appear as little more than imaginative constructs (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), and therefore appear to be absent, their presence is acutely felt when breakdowns occur. Said otherwise, as long as everyone follows organizational scripts (Latour, 2013) or narratives (Boje, 1991), the organization may appear too evanescent to be studied.

However, thankfully for organizational researchers, people are regularly reminded of the organization's existence thanks to the many roadblocks it seems to be laying down for them. The very logic of organizational presence therefore implies human being's passivity, as it is precisely when things don't go according to plan that organizational scripts become problematic. The study of organizational presence therefore is the study of people's engagement with the organization as it makes itself present through its requests, its procedures, its missing immigration stamps, its green and yellow codes, its visits to a bunker, and so forth. Accounting for the way we, researchers, are affected by and deal with these encounters therefore amounts to describing the organization as we experienced it.

Activity and passivity

Studying the way organizations become present by looking at how we are affected by them puts us, researchers, in a position of relative passivity. That is why we propose a corresponding use of a passive voice to account for such a research process: rather than *following* an organization, perhaps we should allow ourselves to *be* followed by it and its various

materializations. Such a shift also implies a different way of reporting our "findings." Rather than writing about our heroic ventures into organizations, perhaps we should accept that a truer accounting genre would be far less linear, and much more unpredictable, as different characters, human or not, emerge to punctuate our stories with their own contribution.

Rather than the main protagonist of his or her research proejct, perhaps the researcher would be more accurately positioned as a sort of narrative echo chamber, amplifying the actions of others as they resonate with his or her own experience, and accepting to reverberate the screeching ante-narratives of multiple specters until they form an "organizational" story (see Boje, 2011). Actively producing a faithful account of the organization therefore requires, paradoxically, accepting one's passive research position.

More than an attitude on the part of the researcher, though, overcoming the passivity/ activity duality is crucial to understand how organizational action is possible at all. Bencherki & Cooren (2011) describe a "possessive" ontology of organizations, in tune with the hauntological methodological perspective we propose here. Rather an active subject possessing passive objects, a possessive ontology recognizes that people are possessed by their organization, and that it is precisely this possession that allows organizations to "have" actions and, thus, to act: "such a view is developed by relying on a view of *being as having*: the organization exists inasmuch as it appropriates other beings and fills itself, so to speak, with them. It captures them, however, in only one aspect: that of their actions" (p. 1581).

It is therefore by being possessed by a seemingly abstract/absent organization that people make this organization concrete/present through their actions. In return, being possessed by the organization also allows people "to be *objectified* (i.e., to be enrolled is to be acknowledged as fully existing entities), to *actualize their potential* and to become more of what they can be" (Bencherki and Cooren, 2011, p. 1598). In other words, being *passively* possessed is the

condition by which people may become full-fledged, *active* members. The same apparent

paradox is true of researchers attempting to provide an insider's account of the organization: they

must let themselves be possessed by the organization, because it is precisely in looking at what

the organization does to the researcher and makes him / her do, i.e. at the effects of its possession,

that the organization's action may be witnessed and temporarily rendered visible in and through

the researcher's body. Accordingly, this posture is hauntological in the sense that "the specter, as

its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible"

(Derrida, 1994, p. 125).

> *The materiality of action*

A hauntological approach, by making the organization present through its materializations

and by making passivity a condition of organizational action, points to a particular view of action.

Indeed, hauntology agrees with Shatzki (2001), for whom "the social is a field of embodied,

materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings" (p.

13) where action consists, accordingly, of "*materially mediated* nexuses of activity" (p. 20,

emphasis original). In other words, there is no abstract action, as it is necessarily embodied in

objects, artifacts, sites, bodies, and texts. To study action thus implies accounting for its

materialization. This is crucial for organizational researchers as it means that we can "describe

important features of the world we inhabit as something that is routinely made in practice using

tools, discourse and our bodies" (Nicolini, 2012, p. 2).

Such a material view of action does not only mean that it is witnessable. It also entails that

it can be experienced concretely. Indeed, as long as we understand organizational rules,

procedures, or constraints as abstract entities, it is difficult to figure out how they may interact

with the researcher's body, senses, and affect. Hauntology, by specifying that even a ghostly presence is a material presence, clarifies the researcher's encounter with concrete, situated action is contaminated or haunted by actions that took place before, elsewhere – for instance, prior to the researcher's arrival – and that together form the researcher's experience of the organization. Such a material view of action was already put forth, for instance, in Vygotsky's notion of activity theory (Engeström, 2005), or in Callon and Latour's actor-network theory (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005). These theories speak of material "systems" and "networks" – like the ghosts' iron chains, these entangle beings in intricate relations with other beings, to form a collective action (Derrida, 1994).

It is by agreeing to be chained in their turn – with real, material links – that researchers may hope to understand organizational reality from within. This aligns with what a process-based perspective (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) proposes: researchers must be fully present in the field as situations unfold, in order to account for the trajectories of practices that materially connect time and space (Vasquez, 2013). In other words, the knowledge the researcher gains of the organization does not only occur as an intangible mental process observing material reality: it is also through concrete, situated, and embodied knowledge that the researcher may understand apparently absent, evanescent or absent realities.

Organizing as articulating

Being in the midst of the organization as it is present through materialization offers the researcher a particular vantage point to observe the process of organizing. The researcher's experience is at the meeting point of various modes of presence: the first author's experience of MSF, for instance, brought together people, mud, a yellow code, rumours, and so forth. What the researcher discovered is the way those different materializations fit and work together to create

an organization, MSF's mission in South Sudan, that exceeded and overwhelmed him. In other words, what he witnesses is the organizing process at work. Organizing must always be done again, as "we acknowledge impermanence (we accept that coordination and interdependence are not stable but need to be re-accomplished)" (Weick, 2009, p. 7). More specifically, we argue, what the researcher witnesses is a double work of *articulation*.

The first is an articulation between "states, performances, and activities" (Cooren, 2000, p. 91). The researcher, indeed, discovered how the HoM's speech connected a rumour concerning an attack, a map, and fleeing people coming into the refugee camp. That connection, in turn, led her to declare that her colleagues and herself were now in yellow code, while yesterday they were in green code. This change of code, in its turn, led the researcher and others to take a trek to a bunker. Said otherwise, the actions of a person, a rumour, a map, a group of fleeing people, a code, a trek… in spite of their various ontologies, found a way of articulating with each other, to form a fluid assemblage that is experienced as the organization.

The second form of articulation concerns the ability of the first articulation (between states, performances and activities), once it is formed, to speak, i.e., to articulate its demands and expectations. The HoM's speech was such a moment of articulation, as she lent her voice to the many elements she described as saying that they required them to switch to a yellow code and to change their behavior accordingly. Thanks to its materialization in human beings, the organization gains the ability to speak. However, human beings do not have the prerogative of articulating the organization: for instance, a measuring stick (Cooren & Matte, 2010) or electronic instruments (Bencherki, 2016) may also become the spokesobjects of organizations (Vásquez & Cooren, 2011).

Researchers themselves, as they let themselves be possessed by the organization, and therefore experiences the encounter of organizational materializations from the inside, also

contribute to their articulation. By writing ethnography or other forms of organizational research, she also gives a situated and partial voice to the organization, as she expresses through words the boredom, the worry, and the excitement that she feels.

Towards a stronger methodological grounding for ventriloquism

For the past twenty years, authors including Taylor et al. (1996), McPhee and Zaug (2000), Cooren (2000) and Robichaud and Taylor (2004) have promoted a program of research stressing that our communication practices constitute the organizations where we act, a perspective known as the communicative constitution of organization or CCO (see Brummans et al., 2014; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). According to this perspective, actors re-create the organization with each interaction they produce, *in* and *through* communication, the locus where its very emergence is possible (Bisel, 2010). More recently, some of these authors have suggested that when we speak, write, or engage in communication practices, we are also *passers* through which rules, procedures, knowledge and other facets of organizations express themselves (Cooren, 2010; Vásquez, Bencherki, Cooren, & Sergi, 2017).

When we interact, we are also confronting together the values and principles that speak through us (Cooren, 2015). That is why the organizational world is a "plenum of agencies," as we lend some of our activities to other beings by agreeing to passively let them speak through us (Cooren, 2006). This later extension of CCO scholarship has been described as a *ventriloquial* approach: organizations and their human representatives are like the ventriloquist and her puppet; when one speaks, it/she is also spoken by the other (Cooren, 2010, 2016). Interactions and conversations can therefore be analyzed by looking at the figures that are staged by the participants, figures that are explicitly or implicitly positioned as dictating what matters in a given situation. As Cooren, Fairhurst and Huët (2012) suggest:

Analysts do not actually need to keep turning in one direction or another, that is, choose between materiality and discourse, so to speak, … they should rather focus on the multiple ways by which various forms of reality (more or less material) come to do things and even express themselves in a given interaction. (p. 296)

CCO scholars, including the ones defending a ventriloqual approach, have thought their perspective as describing the way members' practices constitute their organization. It is therefore an ontological perspective on the relationship between communication and organization. Indeed, a constitutive vision of communication is a "communicational ontology of the organization, an ontology that embraces the constitutive principle that should be based on communication phenomena to understand and explain the world in which we live, especially here organizations" (Cooren, 2012, p.13). Ventriloquism, then, is something that members do; researchers are located outside of it, and observe the interactions and conversations of members in search for the way they stage organizational figures, mostly relying on conversation analysis (Bencherki, 2014; Cooren, 2007).

This apparent disconnect between ventriloquism's powerful ontological stance and its use of mostly language-based methods to study the materializations of organizational presence has led some authors to question the scope of the approach (Wilhoit, 2016). However, the hauntological analysis we provide above can be seen as an extension of ventriloquism to ethnography. Indeed, there is no reason to assume that the researcher is located outside of the ontological nexus described by CCO and ventriloquism. In fact, the researcher is regularly himself or herself a part of the data analyzed by CCO scholars (e.g. Bencherki, Matte, & Pelletier, 2016; Cooren, Bencherki, Chaput, & Vásquez, 2015; Vásquez et al., 2017). By taking seriously the researcher's participation in the field, and recognizing him or her, as we did here, as a witness from the inside, but also as an object of the organizing articulation, and as letting himself or herself be possessed by the organization, then the dummy/ventriloquist interplay,

which we referred to as passivity/activity, becomes a central engine in the researcher's work, not only as an outside analyst of discursive data, but also as an embodied experimenter of organizational reality.

CCO and its ventriloquial variant, when complemented with a hauntological metaphor that turns their ontological proposal into methodological commitments, offer a powerful stand point for organizational researchers: let yourself be followed. It is a call to let go of our instinctive need to maintain control over situations, and admit that organizations are only present, and therefore witnessable, when we let ourselves be possessed by them, and let them incarnate through our body or engage us through their other materializations. The researcher, in that sense, does not have a privileged position over other organizational participants, but on the contrary, explores the organization according the same modalities that they use to constitute it in their daily activities.

Conclusion: Ethnographing / Being ethnographed

The main task of researchers, we are taught, is to investigate or examine social phenomena (Van Maanen, 2011). To fulfill this duty, it seems that many of us have chosen to get *farther*, both in terms of distance and directness, from their object of study, whether it is an organization or anything else. In organizational study, many have felt that distance gave them a more powerful gaze, from above; this perspective, in turn, has shown them that the organization is an enduring, stable "thing." From such an elevate vantage point, all appears to be clearer: the organization, waiting to be studied, finally can be seized in its entirety. This caricature of standard social science, of course, has been regularly rebuked, but its traces are still apparent even in the most well-meaning studies.

The impression of elevation is in fact the outcome of a process of simplification, as Morin (2008), Latour (1988), but also before them Tarde (1898) have shown. From the top of his academic hill, the elevated researcher sees less, not more: he sees the aggregate tendencies or the common themes, similarities between narratives or the dissemination of an idea. The quarrel then begins: which one of these simplifications represents the organization better? The fact, of course, is that the organization is *all of them at once*. The organization, as its name indicates, consists in the way different materializations are organized, or *articulated*, together.

The researcher must therefore get down from his or her favourite methodological belvedere, and accept to mingle with the crowd. Only then will he or she experience the way a story connects with a computer, how a rule and a crisis work together, how buildings and hierarchy go hand-in-hand. Language is a powerful site to observe these articulations, precisely because it allows talking or writing about things of different ontologies. But language, of course, is also a "thing" of its own, which exactly provides it the power to materialize the other, apparently absent beings (ideas, principles, etc.), but also limits its ability to account for other, non-linguistic forms of articulations.

The fact is that all researchers, no matter how much (analytical) distance they try to put between their object and themselves, including in their writing process, are caught up by their embeddedness in their field, like someone trying to get out of the sea is brought back in with the receding wave's backwash. They have vivid memories of their encounters, they remember their strong emotions, and may have even written about them in their notes. However, in a work of purification (Latour, 1993), they decide to bracket out those facets, and focus on a single materialization as being the most relevant (typically following a deductive approach to make that decision): they limit their data to a series of interviews, or to a content analysis, and resolutely keep themselves out of the picture, except perhaps for a few reflexive remarks. Our guidance to

them is to let themselves be drawn back into the sea, enjoy the swim, and let us know what they learn from it. By making our bodies available as a projection surface for articulation, and by letting ourselves be affected and transformed by these articulations, we make a more faithful and multimodal recording of organizational reality than any single method could ever allow: we use the same embodied resources as members use to constitute their organization.

Such a decentering recognizes that the researcher is not only a knowing subject, but also getting to be known by others as he participates in organizational reality. His actions are an enigma through which possible articulations are tested. Being ethnographed is therefore a posture where the researcher understands that being subjectified and objectified is one single process that co-constitutes her and the organization at once. For the knowing subject to know the organizational object, she must accept to be subjected to it, and therefore to be one of the objects through which it materializes and becomes present. Maintaining clear boundaries between these positions is but an after-the-fact work of purification. The fact is that organizations and people alike are continuously entangled in the "self-production of being in becoming" (Massumi, 2011, p. 84).

A hauntological perspective therefore revisits what it means to interpret data. As Lorino and his colleagues (2011) noted, describing "what people do" is but "the tip of the iceberg" (p. 776). What people do not do matters just as much. This includes "what people would be prepared to do but are prevented from doing by circumstances, what they imagine, dream or fear could be done" (p. 776). Interpreting organizations therefore requires accounting for both presence and absence of action, what takes place but also what does not. This appears like an impossible task – how to describe what never happened? – but thinking in term of passivity at least paves the beginning of an answer. By describing the way a customs officer withheld his passport, how the mud made his movements difficult, how he experienced boredom at the

compound, the first author was also describing what he expected but did *not* get to do – proceed swiftly through the airport, walk briskly as he usually does, have plenty of social activities. However, this is not a mere psychological study of his expectations: it is rather an analysis of the articulation of different materializations, whose interplay made impossible some actions but permitted others.

Accounting for the entirety of the organization therefore requires not only objectively describing what *happened* as if it were the intention of human actors, but also, and with an equal objectivity, how action is channelled, rerouted, prevented, or enabled thanks to the articulation of different programs of action. The researcher's embodied experience is a privileged site to discover those present/absent actions, as they take the form of affective states such as frustration, remorse, fear or, on the contrary, pride or gratitude. Affect, in that sense, is not about what goes on in your head: it is "the capacities to act and to be acted upon" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2011, p. 1).

Being ethnographed, therefore, means acknowledging, as organizational researchers, that we have a great capacity to act, but also that we are acted upon. We *get touched* by the people working for the organizations we study; we *are influenced* by the atmosphere, the climate, or the ambiance; we *become interested* in particular issues or stakes. An important facet of a hauntological analysis is that it recognizes that the organization continues to have an impact beyond the fieldwork per se. Indeed, the first author continues to realize, as we write this chapter, that countless memories have followed him home since he got back from South Sudan about two year and a half ago. Images of errant dogs running around the MSF compound still pursue him; the murky, crowded and slippery paths that led to the hospital stick to his memory; he is appalled by guilt and sorrow at the knowledge that, after all theses months, displaced people are still living in these atrocious settings; he is moved as the recollection of the willingness and generosity of

the MSF staff, their smiles amid the muddy place; his heart is filled by the beauty of the land and its bold richness; and he is dumbfounded by the stupidity of war and the indifference of most people.

All in all, he has not completely returned to what he was before his mission to South Sudan, not to mention all of the previous ones. The images, feelings and thoughts keeps coming back like a ghost, making him doubt "this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth" (Derrida, 1994, p.48). He is now thousands of kilometers away from any war zone, sipping coffee in a well-lit office, sheltered from any danger and yet, his body is literally marked with MSF, his mind is branded with red-hot images of the camp, and it is precisely thanks to these that, again, in this chapter, we materialize that organization through our writing.

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