DECENTERING THE LEARNER THROUGH ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

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[Accepted to the scholarly programme of the 2018 Academy of Management annual meeting. **Please don't cite without permission**.]

ABSTRACT

This paper builds on previous studies of experiential learning, reflexivity in management learning, and accounts of teaching through alternative organizations. We theorize management learning from the perspective of students who worked with and researched organizations that present an alternative to typical organizational forms and performative intent. Through an analysis of interviews and reflective diaries, we investigate how students learn in such environments and argue that theories of learning must account for how contexts, in which the performance of profit-orientation breaks down, induce reflexivity. In particular, we draw attention to the role such contexts play in challenging students to dwell in inconsistencies, ambiguities, contradictions and non-linear ideas. Drawing upon the work of Judith Butler's theory of performativity we illustrate that such reflexivity is not an individual capacity but a contextual practice. Subsequently, by 'decentering the learner' we develop upon existing ideas on reflexive practitioners and develop the burgeoning literature on alternative organizations. We conclude by making the argument that management education, whether critical or not, needs to go beyond awareness and through to responsible action. Such

action does not rely on more tools or concepts for individuals but experiences of inhabiting an increasingly ambiguous and complex world.

Keywords: Critical Management Education; Reflexivity; Alternative Organizations; Reflexive Practitioner; Experiential Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Halfway through their placement projects one of the authors provides a workshop on contemporary understandings of CSR, sustainability and new concepts like creating shared value for the students. By this time students would just be getting into collecting their "data" and understanding the scope of their project. During the session, he draws upon Shearman's (1990) work on CSR and the various other work conducted on the "definitions of CSR." Doing so leads to the following interaction:

> "So, and this is in 1990, there were 140 different definitions of CSR, each stressing similar sort of things but with minor differences." [Laughter from the class.] "What? What's funny?"
>
> "You can't be serious?", Amit shouts from the back of the room.
>
> "I'm being serious, well I am quoting others who are very serious."
>
> Amit responds referring to the "alternative" dissertation option, "So, really, you've sent us out into [town] into a strange company to do our project on a thing that no-one understands?" [More laughter.]
>
> With a smile I respond, "Yeah, if you like."

Studies of CSR, social enterprises, charities and alternative organizations are regularly pushed to the back of syllabus in the business school in favor of international business, strategy and operations management that stress the "performative intent" of profit, efficiency and shareholder value. In his 2015 presidential address to the Academy of Management, Adler

(2016) alerts us to reconsider this teaching philosophy, both its content and methodology, to align it with prevailing social issues and show that managerial/economic considerations are imbued with matters of ethics and society. Similarly, Fotaki and Prasad (2015) argue for reformulating management education along the lines of answerability, one's responsibility and accountability to an other, and relationality, the idea that we can only understand who we are in relation to others. One way they suggest this could be done is by using experiential and participatory methods, including "trips to the field" (Fotaki & Prasad, 2015: 571).

In this article, we theorize student responses to "alternative" organizations that problematize typical business aims and subsequently use more ambiguous, blended and paradoxical terms in their daily operations. In particular, we aim to answer the modest question: how do students learn from their experiences in "alternative" organizations? In doing so, we contribute to theories of learning as well as providing insights into new forms of critical management education (CME). Articles that consider alternatives and pedagogy (e.g. Fournier, 2006; Reedy & Learmonth, 2009) mostly consider lecture-and-seminar centered learning and appear to marginalize voices of students instead, preferring to focus on curriculum or reflection. Such an approach is puzzling considering the variety of educational strategies in management education that engage students outside the class. For example, a cluster of research exists on critical dialogical practice and the creation of the critically reflexive practitioner (Cunliffe, 2002, 2004, 2013, 2016; Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015; Allen, Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2017). This approach complements existing experiential learning theories (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, 1971) by encouraging students to make sense of their own praxis, to better understand their "knowing-from-within" (Shotter, 1993: 18). However, unlike theories of experiential learning that prioritize cognitive processes of interpretation and retention, Cunliffe and colleagues emphasize ideas of social constructionism to show how individual learners maintain their "realities" and "identities." Subsequently, this paper builds on the burgeoning work on “learning from alternatives,” but also contributes to existing literature on the prospects of reflective learning outside of the classroom.

Our contribution is threefold. Firstly, we provide much needed empirical evidence on student learning “through alternatives” drawing on 18 reflective logs, 13 interviews and observations of students’ experiences. Secondly, in seeking to theorize our observations and interview data we critically integrate the above theories of learning. In particular, we problematize the existing focus on the individual learner as well as the overly generous capacity attributed to individuals to reflect and act. Our argument develops Cunliffe’s recent work on “intersubjective ontology” (Cunliffe, 2016). However, we stress the idea of the impossibility of giving a reflexive account and propose instead to decenter the learner. Finally, building on accounts of teaching with alternative organizations (Fournier, 2006; Reedy & Learmonth, 2009), we draw attention to the role such contexts *outside the classroom* play in challenging students to dwell in inconsistencies, ambiguities, contradictions and non-linear ideas where students “walk tightropes” and move “beyond borders” (Mintzberg, 2004). Moreover, if we take the “critical” in CME seriously, then we as educators must aim to challenge students to rethink the status quo and not simple being more proficient at dealing with its contradictions. We believe, though, that CME needs to go beyond awareness and through to action. Such action does not rely on more tools or concepts for individuals (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015) but experiences of inhabiting a world that is increasingly becoming ambiguous and complex (Barnett, 2004, 2007).

In the following, we provide a brief review of the existing literature on experiential learning, reflexivity, and the use of alternatives in management education. Then, we describe our methodology for collecting data and present our empirical material. We go on to show that Cunliffe’s work can be useful in explaining one part of the process of learning whereby individuals become aware of problems. We envisioned, as suggested by Reedy and

Learmonth (2009), that exposure to alternative organizations would provide fuel for students to challenge the predominant ideas of business and in some cases to imagine and partly enact a future that challenges the status quo. However, hope for the future was seldom found. Instead, cynicism, critique and anger became the dominant responses for most students. To make sense of this, in the last part of the article, we draw on Butler (1990, 1993, 2005, 2010) to highlight the importance of contexts that provide certain opportunities for new subject positions to form. We note that, because one's subjectivity is always constituted in relation with others, it matters in what contexts our students practice reflexivity. For students to learn and change their practices, we need to actively facilitate their exposure to contexts where their performance of standard business school teachings is not felicitous. This shifts the focus of learning from the reflexive individual to questions of contexts and the interplay of performatively sustained structures and performative agency through *others*.

EXPERIENCE, COGNITION AND REFLEXIVITY

"Lived experience," claims Grey (2004: 183) encouraging management education to become both relevant *and* responsible, "is a more promising vehicle for the introduction of messy, irrational complexity which is arguably closer to managerial realities." Indeed, several studies have examined ethical or responsible learning through experiential and embedded teaching methods (e.g. Baden & Parkes, 2013; Lavine & Roussin, 2012; Sroufe, Sivasubramaniam, Ramos, & Saiia, 2015). Most of these studies, however, focus on *outcomes* from certain student activities and subsequently concentrate on the outcomes of particular modules and offer explanations as to why certain things did not happen. What they do not provide are better understandings of the on processes of *how* these outcomes emerged. Motivated by the latter, Kurucz et al. (2014) look to placing students within "limit situations" concerning paradoxical terms like sustainability. They advocate for the importance of education to be an embedded and experiential process whereby critique can be engendered by identifying paradox. However, Kurucz et al. (2014) focus on the outcomes of such experiences and do not attempt to theorize the processes of learning experienced by their students. The stress on embeddedness of the learner speaks to the broader work on experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; see Kolb, 1971), critical management pedagogy (Reynolds, 1997) and reflexive practitioners (Cunliffe, 2002, 2004, 2016). These theories of learning, albeit in different ways, emphasize the key role of experience and underscore the individual as the interface to learning. Kolb (1971), as explored in detail by Holman et al. (1997), draws upon a cognitive psychological register that privileges the role of cognition and even uses a picture of the human brain to model the learning process. Such a position neglects context, the role of social construction and meanings. Reynolds (1997) questions the capacity of individuals to act in certain contexts. For him, the focus upon reforming or radicalizing the individual is politically futile and may even support the status quo.

Cunliffe (2002, 2004) proposes critical dialogical practice and the figure of the critically reflexive practitioner as a new mode of approaching (management) learning and education. Combining critical pedagogies and social constructivism, she argues that we learn when we make sense of our own praxis, i.e. when our "knowing-from-within" (Shotter, 1993: 18) or tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) become apparent by our "being struck". Thus, learning is re-conceptualized as "an embodied, responsive process" (Cunliffe, 2004: 411) that goes beyond applying (critical) theory to order experience (the "outside-in" approach of *reflection*), and instead, emerges from reflecting on how and why one contributes to maintaining a particular reality (the "inside-out" approach of *reflexivity*). Cunliffe (2004) then proposes to explore the differences and connections between reflex actions and enunciations, reflective sense making, and reflexive learning from within the experience through a staged class exercise to reveal the constructedness of the world and students' reflective/reflexive journals. Cunliffe's approach complements the cognitive orientation of Kolb's theory. However, her focus on redefining learning “from discovering already existing objective entities, to becoming more aware of how we constitute and maintain our ‘realities’ and identities” (Cunliffe, 2002: 37), still emphasizes the individual as the main site for learning. This focus upon the learner to become more aware and to subsequently (re)consider their position through a dialogical process ends up, like Kolb, privileging the agentic aspect of learning.

More recently, Cunliffe has also advocated for “an intersubjective ontology” (2016: 742). Hibbert and Cunliffe define reflexivity as a “means of interrogating our taken-for-granted experience by questioning our relationship with our social world and the ways in which we account for our experience” (2015: 180). Moreover, they distinguish between a self-reflexivity, which is one’s capacity to see what is wrong or injurious about their actions and critical-reflexivity, which entails the questioning of social practices and organizational policies. Here the consideration of others still focuses on interactions between separate individuals. Cunliffe (2016) introduces a Ricoeurian presumption of one being “always in relation *with* others” (p. 743) without whom we are unthinkable. Finally, Allen, Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith (2017) develops the notion of “radical-reflexivity,” which explicitly recognizes that the reflector’s positionality influences their reflection.

We want to extend this problematization of the overly generous capacity attributed to individuals to act in certain contexts drawing on Butler’s work on performativity and subjectivity (1990, 1993, 2005, 2010). Butler speaks about the subject as a discursive product but extends the possibilities for engagement with broader communities, and through such engagements theorizes possibilities for resistance and potential agency. Like Nietzsche (1998), Butler sees no “being” behind the deed, rather, identity is only formed through action, others and particular knowledges, norms, habits and routines. For her, subjectivity is both necessary and fictive. Necessary, as it gives order and meaning to existence, but also fictive, as it is discursively produced. Building on this fictive subject position Butler notes that it is impossible to give a full account of oneself. Such accounts are always given for someone else, in response to a relational expectation of an *other*, and the language used to describing ourselves, “the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making” (Butler, 2005: 21). However, such an activity is not simply linguistic, it is not purely through language that one hails the proverbial Althusserian police officer, but the reiterated performances through which the police officer and *his* authority is established in the first place by himself and others.

From this perspective, two problems emerge regarding reflexivity. First, the concept of radical-reflexivity (Allen et al., 2017) leads down a rabbit hole of trying to account for the position from which that very positionality is judged. As Rhodes (2009) argues, admitting the impossibility of a full reflexive account that cannot be settled for all actually enhances one’s openness to the ethical demand of producing new self-descriptions in new contexts. Second, building on Butler and poststructuralist philosophy more generally, we think it’s more useful to talk about subject positions rather than individuals. If reflexivity is not a capacity that one either develops or not, but a practice, as we argue below, then the doing of reflexivity necessarily depends on the subject position one occupies in each context. This highlights the importance of the particular context in which experience and reflection co-create each other.

LEARNING FROM ALTERNATIVES

Alternative organizations can be loosely described as any organization or organizational practice that challenges dominant field level norms around business, capitalism (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014) and notions of performative intent (Lyotard, 1984). Research on using “alternative organizations” in management education (e.g. Fournier, 2006; Reedy & Learmonth, 2009) has interrogated the importance of context in learning, though at the same time lost the experiential element by remaining in the classroom. Reedy and Learmonth (2009) start with the premise that creating critically reflexive practitioners can easily fail (Reedy, 2003; Reynolds, 1999). Moreover, they suggest that the reflexivity proposed by Cunliffe can act as a kind of therapy for practitioners and students and actually reinforce “competitive individualism” (Reedy & Learmonth, 2009: 242) and the broader status quo in business. Instead, they propose a content driven approach that replaces continental political theorists or attempts to create reflexive practitioners, with historical, fictional and current alternative case studies. These should “forge intellectual tools to bring about change” through a “questioning of the common sense assumptions of corporate management, restoring greater choice and debate” (ibid.: 256). In doing so, words such as discourse, subjugation, discipline, subjectivity and power are subsequently replaced by examples of cooperatives, realist utopias, managing tensions and examining how certain organizations subvert, manipulate or challenge the “market.” Such an approach sounds perfect in theory but practice seems more challenging.

Teaching a class that explored and debated alternative organizations, Fournier (2006) quickly found out the strength of sedimented understandings of her students and the neo-liberal teachings of other parts of her business school’s curriculum. She notes how students often sympathized with critiques of contemporary managerialism and capitalism. Yet, later they would fall back onto thinking that the only way to counteract ethical and environmental challenges are market-driven, and alternatives simply represent a nostalgic longing for the past premised on naïve understandings of economics. Fournier concludes her paper by advocating decentering the monolithic “nature” of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 2002) and embedding learning within praxis (Freire, 1973):

> Students may be more likely to take alternatives seriously if, as part of their learning, they were required to work in, and reflect on, organizations that sought to break away from the dominant capitalist model […] Although “work placement” and work-related learning are usually envisaged in terms that would equip students for capitalist

> organizations, there is no reason why these practices could not take place in alternative organizations. (Fournier, 2006: 308)

Both Fournier (2006) and Reedy and Learmonth (2009) are theoretically persuasive but they leave up to the imagination what their suggestions would look like in practice. Bridgman, Cummings and McLaughlin (2016) offer some sort of a solution by tracing the "invented tradition" of the Harvard case method. They suggest returning to the origin of case studies as fieldtrips to organizations to hear from multiple stakeholders, which create opportunities to reflect on labor relations *outside* the classroom too. As they highlight, "during times of crisis, the problem-solving approach," which is present in the reversal of Fournier's students to market-based solutions, "becomes a problem itself, because it is more concerned with making assumptions rather than examining them" (ibid.: 33). Rather than thinking with the case, students are encouraged to reflect on how the case (and by extension the implied managerial decision maker) frames the world.

In summary, neither a focus on context, nor on experience alone is sufficient for learning from alternatives. The individual focus of experiential learning is not remedied and relationality is not attained by purely talking about alternative contexts. As we explain analyzing our data in the following sections, we contend that learning is always an issue of embodiment (cf. Butler, 1993) and not just cognition and reflection. We believe that the projects we provide for our students to engage, learn and work with alternative organizations as living cases outside the classroom during a placement period create opportunities for such context-dependent reflexive learning. There is, however, a need for empirical insights on what happens with students' learning during such placements. In the following we introduce our methodology before moving on to provide such empirical "stories" (Cunliffe, 2002, 2004) of embodied learning experiences that students' co-author as "triggers" for learning.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study comes from on-going observations, 18 reflective logs and 13 interviews with alumni of a dissertation option at a UK business school. The dissertation option, present on undergraduate and postgraduate courses, sent students out of the lecture theatre and into organizations that were actively pursuing issues relating to social mobility, diversity, sustainability, responsibility and inequalities. Interviews were used to gain a bottom-up and student-focused understanding of the learning process.

Research Context

The "alternative" dissertation is offered as an option for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The two module leaders, one academic and one practitioner have cultivated relationships with a variety of organizations located around the business school. These organizations range from charities, large and small social enterprises, NGOs and in some cases CSR departments in large corporations. Although such placements are not in communes, co-operatives, anarchist collectives, friendly societies or off-shoots from social movements they do seek to challenge the status quo in various ways and most do not aim to focus on profit maximization, share-holder primacy and various other characteristics of performative intent. We are of course not suggesting that CSR departments are in any way an alternative organization, but as Wright and Nyberg (2013) show, CSR departments can be full of individuals who are by no means corporate drones. Both the postgraduate and undergraduate management courses offered at the business school would very much be described as un-critical, with the exception of three electives that offer insight into climate change, business and society and one module on CSR. As one student notes:

> You've said an interesting word there "perspective." The modules I have done here don't consider perspective… It's just one way. And this is where this dissertation

> becomes more difficult. […] It's explore, critique, think. You don't optimize. This is about thinking. (Kenneth)

Students have worked and helped projects in major insurance companies, start-ups seeking to revolutionize and reduce the carbon footprint of the cattle feed industry, law firms offering pro-bono work to ethnic minorities, ethical investment, social finance, social housing and in an organization providing innovative campaigns for sustainable food produce. Lund Dean and Jolly (2012) argue that management education, and experiential learning that attends to ethical dilemmas, emotions and values, can lead students to experiencing cognitive dissonance, which leads to their disengagement from learning opportunities in order to protect their identities. Our pedagogic set up anticipates these challenges by clarifying with students that we attempt to provide a supportive space for exploration but minimal input and guidance. Such "contingent support" (Hitchin & Maksymiw, 2009), encourages individual learning from experience within ambiguity. The project also allows students to receive feedback from people at the host organization as well as to claim ownership of their own learning by negotiating several aspects of the project and their dissertations.

Methods of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews. We conducted 13 formal interviews that were recorded and transcribed verbatim (Appendix A). Interviews were roughly split between postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) students. Interviewees were contacted via a mass email which was sent out to all alumni from the course. In some cases, they were undertaken 3-4 years after the student had finished their project. However, the majority of interviews were with students who had recently finished their dissertation. The interviews provided a space within which to reflect upon the project. In line with our theoretical framework, we don't think that interviews provide some form of privileged unmediated access to reality (Alvesson, 2003). Rather it is during the interview process that subjectivities and social worlds are (re)created (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). It is such subjectivities that we concentrated on in our analysis.

Reflective Logs. Reflective logs were introduced as an integral part of the undergraduate dissertation. Learning reflected in log entries doesn't usually show a linear development from simply paraphrasing acquired knowledge (surface learning) through to reflection, and finally to reflexivity (Dyer & Hurd, 2016). Still, logs provided an opportunity for students to step outside of the dissertation, a piece of work that could be heavy laden with theory, empirics or a particular focus on the organization, and write about their feelings. Such a space allowed an opportunity to get angry about the barriers stopping any form of progress in a CSR department or to reflect on what they had seen. Thus, the practice of writing logs encourages reflexive engagement (Varner & Peck, 2003) and autonomous learning (Rué, Font, & Cebrián, 2013). Importantly for us, the 18 logs we analyzed (Appendix B) provided reflective, emotive and self-critical data that allowed an insight into how students felt their projects had gone and some of their immediate responses to their experience.

Observations. All authors were involved in the supervision process of students on the course and which accounts for an added immersion in the experience and the data. We draw on some of these reflections and observations in the presentation of the data in the findings section. Observational data was collected by taking notes after key events and meetings.

Analytical Approach

Our approach to data analysis utilized abductive reasoning (Peirce, 1965) whereby themes identified in the interview data were compared and contrasted with existing theoretical concepts and ideas. Such a process was on-going and the aim was to use construct a theory to account for the emergent themes and codes in the data. In doing so we draw upon existing pedagogic research but note issues that are not addressed within extant literature. Our analytical approach can be split into three phases.

The first phase consisted of transcribing, reading, re-reading as well as re-listening to our interviews. As a form of open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) this allowed us to develop various codes and themes that emerged in the data. Coding was performed using Nvivo as this provided a useful way to share data between co-authors and store, unpack and code data in a shared document. The second phase of our research was conducted once we were satisfied that saturation had been reached and no new themes were emerging from the data. This phase involved extracting the more prominent themes in the corpus of our data and involved the knitting together of open codes.

Having identified the themes that we present in the next section, it was then time to re-engage with the literature on learning. Initially, the main literature we were working with was Cunliffe's work on reflexive practitioners and learning. Nudged by our emerging findings, though, we noted the burgeoning research on learning within and through alternative spaces or at least non-corporate organizational spaces. This finally allowed us to re-examine our data focusing on the role of context in learning. In particular, we found the literature on student learning in management to be heavily focusing on postgraduate/MBA learning and less on undergraduate experiences (see Perriton, 2014). That being so, there seemed to be excessive weight put on debating the ways in which learners might be "conscientized" or turned, via reflexivity or exposure to critical ideas, into critical managers. Such ideas appeared to be premised on a particular career position or managerial role as well as being overly reliant on the agency, identity and power of the individual with regards to action.

FINDINGS

Our findings outline the various student responses to studying alternatives. First, we discuss the role of ambiguity and the conceptual and pragmatic tensions involved when working with organizations that go beyond ideas of profit maximization, questioning ideas around growth and attempting to create social and environmental "good." Then, we discuss the main themes that emerged. One group of students, who worked with larger corporations occupied a cynical position that sought to challenge big corporations and their CSR activities. Interestingly, the other group, who worked with charities and smaller firms, appeared to occupy a hyper-critical position, whilst others in this group started to adapt to their new context.

Conceptual and Pragmatic Tensions

On a conceptual level, many students encountered problems when attempting to work with concepts like sustainability or responsibility. As noted by a student working in a CSR department: "…sustainability is also perceived by companies in completely different ways. That's what I learnt about Novo Nordisk and Unilever. They don't like to talk about sustainability – they hate that word" (Chloe). Students placed in social enterprises or world leading CSR units had to quickly get to grips with concepts that did not cross-over into other realms or even other organizations. For Shaun, working at a charity that hoped to increase volunteering he would, time and time again he came up against resistance to practices that might make practices more efficient. Despite Shaun continuing to argue that by doing so, it is possible to help more people and thus do more "good", his ideas about improving the website were shot down by people who were convinced that he should spend his time helping people and not playing with websites. As he notes: "But when you think about good vs. efficiency… they are so different. That you've got some real animosity between people that can't be resolved… because they're not comparable" (Shaun).

Here, even notions of "good" are contested. This also speaks to a difference in vocabulary and mind-set of individuals that going out and doing *good* is somehow better than finding ways to help more through certain processes "efficiency". Indeed, Shaun frequently had to stop himself talking about efficiency as it "was considered a dirty word in the charity". This is despite the fact that, in some cases, efficiency can be a useful thing, especially if you are trying to do "good" (Cummings & Bridgman, 2014).

Students reported on a first-hand experience of businesses attempting to blend goals of profit, efficiency or different forms of finance with social, environmental and charitable goals in complex ways. Coupling these theoretical and practical conceptual tensions with the initial ambiguity of the project led to a significant shock. Going beyond the classroom can be tough for a student, going beyond the classroom into a business that did not play by the same rules as the businesses in textbooks, case studies and lectures made things tougher. Alongside the more academic or linguistic tensions discussed in this section were pragmatic tensions experienced through attempts by "others" to encourage learning.

On-going collaboration between the student and the organization became a troubling issue for most students. In most cases organizations were asked to take the lead, however, that lead could also lead to more troubles:

> This was not an essay question which says: "go make up a marketing plan which increases the company's sales by 20%." This was like: "we [the host organization] have got no idea what we want to do, so can you tell us?" (Shaun)

So, even if an organization was sure on what it wanted from the project, regularly the multiplicity of goals and diverse tensions of individuals working within this field rubbed off on students: "Even after only a few meetings and conversations with the team, it was effortless to understand their mood and motives. Reflecting on my experiences I understood that naturally different people in an organization have different motives for being part of the organization. (Amit, reflective log)

Balancing understandings, pressures, organizational politics and contradictory logic thus became part of the project. Being confronted with ambiguity, with contingency, with a lack of defined rules, definitions or theories is the inevitable start for most research. However, combining these internal pressures with the conceptual tensions mentioned previously created an uncomfortable (although we believe necessary) atmosphere. As a consequence of this, the initial period of the student projects is punctuated by emotions of worry, concern and feelings of being overwhelmed. Support was available to all students. Theories, definitions, previous research and methodologies are provided to students but not in a prescriptive or didactic way. This is done first and foremost to create a schism between students' prior forms of learning that are dominated by prescriptive theoretical models, mainstream theory and modules often concerning different functional areas of an organization. In doing so, the aim is to make sure that learning takes place within an embodied scenario full of pragmatic as well as conceptual tensions. Couple these issues with the jeopardy of working on a "live" project and the usual concerns of getting a good grade the student became significantly invested in the scenario.

Disbelief and Frustration: Critical and Hyper-Critical Students

Interestingly, and completely contra to our initial thoughts, the majority of students actually became very critical of the companies in which they worked and studied. Such opinions seemed to be formed through two pathways. First, some students working with mainstream organizations were actively spotting "greenwash" or symbolic CSR activities. In the second instance students were concerned about how poorly a supposed "alternative" and "good" organization was actually performing.

Greenwashing and Disbelief

Geoff was a postgraduate student who entered into a firm with a roof garden. His role was to evaluate the benefits of this roof garden with a particular angle on the benefits to employee engagement. Doing the preliminary research Geoff found clips from the *Guardian*, the *Times* and the *Evening Standard* all talking about the organic food growing on the roof of an office building. The newspaper articles talked about employee gardening clubs that helped ensure that employees got a full lunch break in an organic and green space. He was both excited and yet perplexed. Having grown up in Hong Kong he was somewhat confused as to why a corporation would bother to do such a thing. Having been given a bit more of a brief by the

CSR department at the organization he started to go out and talk to employees. What he noticed very quickly, is that no-one uses the roof garden. “There was a contradiction – in terms of what they said publicly and then what actually really happened” (Geoff). In fact, very few employees “had time” to go up to the garden at all and even less were involved in gardening. They even ended up hiring a gardener to maintain the crops.

In a similar story, AJ was working with a property developer in the city. Having an interest in property, philanthropy and development AJ was happy with his project, despite the relatively vague brief he was given by his host company. His hosts were seeking to develop a predominantly Bangladeshi part of the city and brought in partners from nationwide supermarkets, coffee shops and various other stakeholders. They were particularly interested in stakeholder engagement and engaging with local communities and businesses. He had some interesting findings:

> I think I learnt about CSR from lots of different angles. And from a company angle it seems like a tick box exercise. No-one is actually passionate about it. No one has said, I want to start a company […] and I’m going to build a property and it’s going to be a socially responsible property. It’s more… I’m going to add the social responsibility in because it makes the environment better and I think I will get the planning quicker. (AJ)

Both students faced some important home truths about their hosts which led to some serious concerns about what they should do. Here the availability of support that prioritizes their findings and their concerns was important. Both ended up writing pretty damning critiques of their host organization and proposals for change in their dissertations and reflective logs and yet translating their more “critical” work into an acceptable report for the business:

> Geoff: the main thing was… realizing that the work I did for them… could be very different to what I did for my dissertation. Once I got that into my head, I was like ok this is fine, I can be critical against them.
>
> Interviewer: What did you give them in the end?
>
> Geoff: I gave them what they wanted, which was an assessment of the impact of the garden. (Geoff)

AJ presented a critical report to his host that traced and focused on the communities that will suffer under the new proposals. However, upon receipt of this report the developer, as you would expect, requested some large changes:

> For the client report, I deleted all the educational stuff [literature] and sent them all of the other stuff [findings]. Actually, they deleted most of it. They said, "this is our report, this is what we want in it. Can you see and converge what you've written and give us what we need?" So I did that, and ended up deleting methodology, lit review, I kept the references in. (AJ)

Geoff, instead took an employee engagement angle and instead noted how difficult it is to engage employees in outdoor gardening. This is especially the case, he added, when these employees work in a law firm where work load regularly requires employees to eat lunch at their desks. "I think employee engagement is a very tough thing… That's what I found out" (Geoff). One of Geoff's proposals in his project was quite simply, give employees less work to do and they will start to use the garden, which we think is one of his smartest conclusions.

Perez, like AJ, also felt empowered to speak out against certain practices and submitted a report that was critical of leadership and control issues at his host organization:

> I think that's so special about this kind of projects because, like, you do an internship, maybe you don't have any leverage because you had to fight to get into that position.

> But, like, coming in as a member of [the Business School], I think that really does help. […] You know you hired [the Business School] to work with you, so, like, let me ask these questions, let me get the information I want. Which maybe you can't do.

What we see from our students here is what any critical CSR scholar would like to see, students peering past the glossy veneer to critique corporate greenwashing. For many critical CSR modules, this is all they seek to achieve. Indeed, for others, critiquing CSR practices did not come easily, in some cases, it impacted on the mark of a student:

> They [the host organization] looked through my dissertation. And certain things were worded differently as a result… And as a result, it looked like I wasn't challenging them enough. It would have been better if I had a free reign. I guess it was my fault. But given free reign, it would have made my dissertation much better. Personally, I felt torn. (Makosi)

In many respects the actions of AJ, Perez and Geoff, at least, could be seen as a "win" for CME, as students have clearly developed critical capacities and are willing to critique corporations. But what happens when students are in less corporate and more socially oriented organizations?

Good Organizations and Frustration

Futurechildren, a company that aims to educate and entertain children from the ages of 4-14 hosted two students over two years. The organization has role playing activities where children can visit and learn about the variety of work opportunities available to them. The aim of this organization is to link school learning with the world of work and to improve social mobility by providing free access to disadvantaged school children whilst also charging premium prices to local, and more affluent, families. Although not self-identifying as a social enterprise, Futurechildren were very keen to show the societal and educational benefits of their organization. Such activities had attracted a variety of interest from charities, NGOs and governmental ministers. However, that was not enough for one of our students: “They’re capitalists! Of course they’re capitalists. They only care about money and shareholders! He even said it just now!” (Rasheeda).

Rasheeda, speaking with one of the authors after their first meeting, was referring to a comment made by the head of education about the organizational structure of the company. During the discussion, the head of education alluded to the shareholders the company has to pay dividends. This, despite all the other things Rasheeda saw the organization was doing regarding education, the local community and schools outside of the city, was enough for Rasheeda to condemn them.

> They say all of this is about education, but they just want people through the doors. They’re not being good, they’re being good to make money… A couple of [other] interviewees said that as well. I mean, they help children to learn and that shouldn’t be disregarded but… (Rasheeda)

Rasheeda’s expectations about how a socially committed company should act did not match what she saw. She seemed reluctant to accept the possibilities of aligning societal/educational outcomes and the pursuit of profit. It was either/or and very little in between.

For Josh, working with a social finance organization was the perfect opportunity to bring his (self-proclaimed) education to bear on a social finance organization:

> I’d say one of the reasons I did this project was because I was feeling these tensions already [between societal benefit and profit]. I think what’s been great about this project is that it takes social issues and puts it into a business context, twinning business with social. And that’s exciting.

Perhaps stemming from the conceptual ambiguity and fluidity of the experience, he was confronted by a variety of different ways to think about business practices and the purpose of finance. Reflecting on his learning experiences in the business school, Josh noted:

> As a Management student at [the Business School], the words “social” and “investment” have rarely been used in the same sentence, let alone used as a term to describe a new and profound way of doing finance! Risk and return is all I knew.

In terms of the outcome of the project, he was fundamentally disappointed with what social finance was offering as an alternative. Unlike Rasheeda at Futurechildren, who struggled to grasp the idea of different flavors of capitalism, Josh was more than happy to accept these tensions. His critique rested on the ethical problems he found in the social finance area. He interrogated the capacity for some charities and social enterprises to serve their constituents:

> There’s already a lot of debt in the world already. Do you really want to mis-sell a load of debt to organizations that are just trying to do some good? So I think that’s where this kind of more serious, more critical tone came from. Social investment sounds really nice. It is an investment from the other side but it’s not an investment where you’re going to get ownership. You won’t. It’s borrowing.

Again, like Rasheeda and Futurechildren, the alternative was simply not good enough. Albeit, in this case, Josh mainly had a problem with the lack of consideration, differently but both in finance education and social investment companies, for the wider social context in which financial practices take place. *Social* investment for Josh was a notion that had no consensus, could be much more social, and was even potentially dangerous to society. It was not good enough, it should be better.

Rich noticed a similar sidelining of the social at his host. Autonomy social housing is an organization based in the South of the UK managing 13,000 homes, employing around 400 employees. Rich prepared for his time at Autonomy by reading up on social housing (a concept he was not aware of) and noted, in particular, the cuts in funding to social housing by the current government. He was anticipating a collection of well-meaning individuals aiming to improve the lives of individuals struggling to find a place to live. When he entered the organization, he quickly realized he was not the only external addition to the organization. Giles, a Porsche driving consultant, was starting his first day with the organization as well, helping to "streamline" and transition Autonomy to a more commercial or private model that could cope with less governmental funding.

> I think the surprising thing was that the scope they set out for the project was purely commercial. There was no consideration to the social side of it. I wasn't asked to consider that… So I could have quite easily looked at it as purely a commercial business – and not even considered the social side of it. And that would have been the easy option… but I wanted to find out more about the social enterprise setting. (Rich)

Rich suddenly became very much at odds with Giles the consultant who had been brought in to streamline the organization. In Rich's 15 or so interviews with employees at Autonomy he spoke to front line staff who had almost forgotten what the organization was trying to achieve. They described talking to Rich as therapy and a nice way to reinvigorate why they wanted to work there in the first place. However, at the same time, Giles focused on creating new processes, more formal checks and monitoring of performance.

Marc faced a similar difficulty at a social enterprise where he was told, "We are all about people, not money or business". Keeping to this promise, however, was difficult in practice:

> Since many of [the Foundation's] clients were seeing the relationship as a B2B service provider/purchaser relationship, acting strictly as a charity and using "non-business language" has been alienating some of their clients. Yet on the other hand, you also

> cannot afford to alienate your staff by proposing something very much against their ideals, as they are the people who need to carry it out. (Marc)

Subsequently, Marc had to adapt his language, rarely talked about money, profit or efficiency:

> What it turned out to be was that profit and efficiency is almost a dirty word in charity… So instead of saying that "this is more efficient" or "this will bring you better returns for investment", you have to mask it. Well, not mask… You needed to really focus on the fact that this brings more value to your clients and more stability to your organization. So stability is something that they understood. (Marc)

Negotiating the troublesome pairing of social and managerial logics presented an arduous task in these alternative organizations, in a way similar to Rasheeda and Josh. Rich and Marc, albeit in opposite ways, were showing a bit more sophistication as they attempted to balance out issues of efficiency and process with the "good" the organizations were hoping to provide. Rich tried to re-introduce the social purpose of the organization, while Marc tried to balance efficiency with social purpose. Finding ways to even out competing tensions, and even just being aware of that balance, became an important learning outcome for both.

These critical instances and stories from our data and teaching experience demonstrate a sense of ambiguity and a variety of tensions that are conceptually and concretely present in our students' experiences. We have shown how some students become critically reflexive about some of the greenwashing and dubious CSR practices, whilst others become frustrated with "good" organizations, and finally how some students try to strike a balance between conflicting logics and ideas.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LEARNING PROCESS: REFLEXIVITY AND DECENTERING THE LEARNER

Being confronted with ambiguity, contingency, and a lack of defined rules is the inevitable start for most research, and even most work, in organizations. This is even more so under the contemporary condition of "supercomplexity" whereby "our descriptions of the world are always contestable and in which we know that to be the case" (Barnett, 2004: 250). Instead of a problem to be overcome, like Cunliffe (2003, 2009), we consider this ambiguity to be something we must accept and abide within – and teach students how to do the same. A consequence of such ambiguity is a form of learning that entails a continuous and open-ended endeavor to explore the various self-other-place relationships that sustain particular forms of subjectivity in an inherently unstable world. Such learning goes beyond "understanding (knowledge)" and "acting (skills)" towards education for "being (self)" by exposing individuals to dilemmas and anxiety-provoking events (Barnett, 2004: 254).

To facilitate this learning, we only provided broad guiding theories, conflicting definitions and methodologies for our students. This created a schism between this project and their prior forms of learning, which is dominated by prescriptive theoretical models. Consequently, as our findings demonstrated, unlike a typical dissertation, our students' learning experiences were full of pragmatic and conceptual tensions with a significant level of jeopardy.

We propose that all CME is both normatively charged and fundamentally concerned with challenging students to rethink the status quo. In the following, we draw upon the empirical material and show that although Cunliffe's work can be useful in explaining one part of the process of learning whereby individuals become aware of problems, we believe, CME needs to go beyond awareness and through to action. Such action, we argue, does not rely on more tools or concepts for individuals (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015), but an awareness of the importance of others, contexts, power as well as past and current actions. We end by proposing the need to decenter the learner. In doing so, focus is turned from a reflexive individual, whose learning may suffer from their individuality, to the importance of context.

How Do Students Learn from Alternative Organizations?

The first group of students, of which Geoff (and his roof garden) and AJ (and his property developers) stood out as prime exemplars, could easily be retold as a reflective/reflexive story. Both went into an organization knowing they were going to work within CSR departments and quickly "became struck" by the inauthentic and disingenuous CSR activities. AJ presented a critical report that he hoped would change some minds, but instead he was asked to re-write his report. Geoff, on the other hand, unreflexively provided a rationalization and apology for the law firm he worked with and pointed out how difficult it can be to engage employees with a heavy workload. Both students were able to be critical of situations they found themselves in – but their critiques were largely dismissed. This first group, appears to corroborate concerns about the lack of change (Reedy, 2003; Reynolds, 1999) as even the most critical were quick to edit their work. Indeed, most students were very vocal against their hosts in their reflective logs which lends support to the idea of reflexive education being an expensive therapy as students cynically distance themselves from their experiences. Moreover, none of these students were employed by their hosts, yet they still found it very difficult to be directly critical. If he was reliant upon the roof-gardened law firm for his salary, Geoff would have been unlikely to produce the same report.

The second group of students worked more closely with alternative organizations seeking to adapt dominant practices of the "market." In this group, Rasheeda and Josh both felt the social enterprises they were involved were "not good enough" or quite simply "capitalists!" Here, cynicism crept in again, but for different reasons. This was not the same as AJ and Geoff who half-expected their larger corporations to be more concerned with their bottom line. Instead, this was partly the inability of the host organizations to match the high expectations of the students, and of the students to adapt to the companies. Both Rasheeda and Josh struggled to combine incompatible logics (see Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Dahlmann & Grosvold, 2017). For them, the company had to be completely good, otherwise it was bad. Here, a reflexive approach could helpfully encourage students to see the various shades of grey present in their situation and reflect on how they might view it differently. What these examples do, however, is substantiate Reedy and Learmonth's (2009) argument. Without exposing students to these alternatives, they might never have had to (be) confront(ed by) and combine such seemingly incompatible logics. Going beyond Reedy and Learmonth, however, we do not simply expose students to alternatives – they are "thrown in" into them. Instead of students finding problems to reflect on, as Cunliffe proposes, students were sent out to understand and work with an organization that was trying to do 'good' but were also full of problems and tensions.

The final group were far more capable of combining incompatible logics. They were less cynical, refused to distance themselves and instead tried to dwell within the grey and the confusion. We would argue, echoing Vince (2010), that CME should be interested in developing such students, who are connected to particular settings and dilemmas, and not simply equipped with tools but with experiences and contexts. Such a student would not be a cynic or an aggressive anti-capitalist but capable of living within tensions, constantly seeking to push towards fairness, equality contesting standard notions of markets, growth and profit.

Decentering the Student: Others, Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Returning to the question of the context in which learning happens, we can further elaborate on the need for embodied experiences with *others* who contradict, challenge and trouble students but also hail particular subject positions of which students previously had limited awareness. For Cunliffe, a student would be called upon by a critical educator to examine their own subjectivity, complicity and practices in a situation in which they regularly found themselves, their office, their building, their car, etc. Responding to such power dynamics a student will often present a remorseful account of how bad they, someone else or "corporations" truly are. Such a confessional experience undoubtedly leads to a brief respite, a degree of cynical distancing (Fleming & Spicer, 2003) and reflexive therapy (Reedy and Learmonth, 2009) but very little by way of actual change or challenge (Contu, 2008).

The students in our study had an academic advisor, but also a mentor in the organization (be it a charity, social enterprise, a CSR department) and various other *others* all hailing the student to take up or negotiate a particular subject position. This hailing is, arguably, more powerful due to the number of people involved and (regrettably) their perceived relevance, than a single academic in their office. In our study, most students became cynics, either completely renouncing CSR as greenwashing or via their struggles to adapt to a subject position that necessitated the tricky blending and combination of social good and capitalist accumulation. The final group of students, however, started to respond to and develop a changed subject position, with its associated knowledges, norms, tensions and morals. This was not caused solely by individual reflection and the interpretive capacity of students but a felicitous hailing to a particular subject position by others in a particular context that made such a hailing possible, tenable and potentially desirable.

Students' "performative agency" stems from their felicitous "reiteration of a set of social relations" (Butler, 2010: 152). A perfect example of this are the failed attempts at critique experienced by AJ and Geoff who, whilst working in less radically alternative large CSR departments, either adapted their own practices in a form of self-surveillance or were literally told how they should act. In the classroom (Fournier, 2006) performative agency usually means the reiteration of the means-ends calculus or "performativity" (Lyotard 1986). Even our students noted that most of their subjects "don't consider perspective" (Kenneth). Thus, management education contributes to this "performativity of performativity" by continuously reiterating common textbook management theories about the importance of the means-ends calculus. In such a context, critiques of capitalism and discussions of alternatives can also implicitly reiterate the norm by treating "critical" management studies as an isolated addendum often introduced once "mainstream" theory has already been covered (see Harney & Dunne, 2013). By *telling* students that means-ends is not the only possible logic for organizing society, tutors perform in a way that does not conform to the hegemonic position – but they do so for an audience that customarily renders this performance infelicitous. Students often do not want to listen, will not play along.

However, something strange happens in the more radically alternative organizations as we have shown. Students enter them with the expectation that such organizations constantly actively pursue their social goals. Reality, however, is messier, which leads to performative acts not wielding their desired effects for two reasons. First, in these organizations the imperative of the means-ends calculus is not fully forgotten but is rather differently "inhabited" (Mahmood, 2005). In such contexts, the neat binaries (between profit/non-profit, business/society, etc.) introduced in most business school curricula are disturbed, "parodied" (Butler, 1990), and students are forced to learn in an embodied way to live with ambiguity. Second, students' performances of performativity and efficiency might fail to produce their desired effect of being recognized as a useful member of the organization. Students can reflect on this by "interrogating [their] taken-for-granted experience by questioning [their] relationship with [their] social world and the ways in which [they] account for [their] experience" (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2015: 180). It is by giving such accounts of who we are, what we do, and so on in response to the ethical need to continually re-describe ourselves for others that our subjectivity is constituted (Butler, 2005). Being "opaque" to ourselves "when we do act and speak, we not only disclose ourselves but act on the schemes of intelligibility that govern who will be a speaking being, subjecting them to rupture or revision, consolidating their norms, or contesting their hegemony" (Butler, 2005: 132). Reflexive accounts of our performative agency thus necessarily have to account for how *others'* experiences and *others'* social worlds constitute our subjectivity.

Thus, it matters in what contexts our students are asked to practice reflexivity. The illusion of being able to "language" (Cunliffe, 2002) an ever more detailed representation of oneself is as false as the capacity to master something or know someone else (Rhodes, 2009). Students' and practitioners' reflexive learning conceptualized this way is centered on a self that gains relational experiences with others, which one then reflexively considers, and which reflection results in learning that influences one's future actions. The idea of students coming to know themselves this way is not only an illusion but it also potentially forecloses being open to the unthinkable, further questioning of who one is – and with it the continuous ethical reflection on the responsibility of one's actions towards the Other (Rhodes, 2009).

Instead of reflexivity being one's quality, it is during the embodied doing of reflexivity that a paradoxical performative agency emerges that in some forms we call "learning." Paradoxical, because it is precisely their failure of performing irreflexivity – i.e. the inevitability of revising their intelligibility as business professionals – that struck students. Thus, in order to "develop more collaborative, responsive, and ethical ways of managing organizations" (Cunliffe, 2004: 408), we might encourage students to be "after reflexivity" (Rhodes, 2009). This would mean both seeking reflexivity and recognizing that it is not something that could, or should, ever be attained. What our research shows, is that in alternative organizations students' attention is drawn to the perplexing contradiction of social enterprises not being purely, or even primarily, social. It was not an option for them not to deal with this ambiguity, whether by way of anger, resentment, or critique.

Take, as an example, Rasheeda's original outburst of "They're capitalists!", aimed at Futurechildren, a social enterprise. Reflecting on this comment and her experience 5 months after the original conversation she notes in an interview:

> I…I…I would not say that. I think capitalist would be wrong because that is just making profit. When I actually thought about it, they're definitely making money. They're out there to make money and a couple of interviewees as well said that. "Yes, we're out there to make money." But obviously they do some good, and that is, I mean they help children to learn and that shouldn't be disregarded. We cannot overlook that. They are not working only for profit. In their own way they're just doing something socially good. They're just giving back to society in the means of education. So I felt that was wrong.

Here we see Rasheeda, being hailed toward a subject position that isn't quite so anti-capitalistic. Instead, she is more aware of the multiple and often conflicting logics at play in many social enterprises and how that "cannot be overlooked." We can happily say that this was done via reflection and reflexivity but it stemmed *from a particular situation* and not the *need* to reflect upon individual practice. Instead, it was formed through action, experience and language having worked closely with Futurechildren employees over an extended period.

We propose that a theory of reflexive learning should incorporate such a decentering of the learner. This would shift the focus from the reflexive individual to questions of contexts and the interplay of performatively sustained structures and performative agency. Reflexive learning is concerned with the question of how certain contexts and subjectivities are sustained, and what might make them change. Such a theory of learning appreciates Ellsworth's (1989) feminist intersectional critique of Freirean critical pedagogy, which still underlies most of CME (Ashcraft & Allen, 2009). Ellsworth's pedagogy of the "unknowable" works with the idea that all knowledge is partial and politically interested and, crucially, potentially oppressive. Thus, instead of trying to change organizations by assuming knowledge of what could make them better, we propose to build on the realization that the most visceral knowledge we have is that of failure to change and to know better (see Bergström & Knights, 2006; Fleming & Banerjee, 2016) and not knowing where our actions might eventually lead. Instead of being stuck on the reflexive practitioner's couch, forever conscientiously but cynically distancing themselves from life's events, teaching our students how to be after reflexivity would prepare them to live with ambiguity and complexity. But for them to *learn* and change their practices we need to actively facilitate their exposure to contexts where their performance of standard business school teachings is not felicitous.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the already fading memory of the global financial crisis, which we might replicate all too soon, and the looming environmental crisis humanity faces, we think it's imperative that management educators engage with questions of ethics and responsibility in business. Alternative organizations become important for such endeavors as they offer students the possibility to realize that it is not utopian to think that social and economic practices can be organized differently. In this article, we presented one potential way of introducing students to alternative organizing and theorized how they learn in such organizations.

We have illuminated how students' reflexivity is created as a response to different contexts that represent more or less radical alternatives to the organizations they normally dwell in and regularly learn about during their studies. Our proposal of decentering the learner, by drawing attention to the importance of context in learning, contributes to three sets of literatures on learning and management education. First, we have shown that using alternatives in critical management education would benefit from getting out of the classroom and exposing students to experiences from which they can learn. Second, we argued that the individualist and cognitive focus of experiential learning theory needs to be complemented by a focus on how our subjectivities and experiences are created in relation with others. Finally, we extended the literature on reflexivity in management learning. We empirically showed that students are more likely to practice reflexivity when they enter contexts where their performance of performativity is rendered infelicitous.

Our research has at least two implications for management educators. First, we need to continue to be after reflexivity. Self-, critical- and radical-reflexivity are all important but to produce change, both in terms of our students and our world, it doesn't seem to be enough. Besides catalyzing students' reflexive consideration of alternative explanations of the world, we must encourage them to become aware of existing attitudes and prejudices, and eventually adapt to a new way of thinking. Placements in alternative organizations offer a vehicle to do this. Second, we need to be mindful of what alternatives we choose to discuss with our students and where we send them out of the classroom. Mildly alternative organizations can be easily written off as greenwashing, and students' expectations of more radical alternatives can make them turn cynical when faced with the messiness of reality. It is possible to prepare students differently before they go on their placements or projects but that may encourage withdrawal as we have seen. More research would have to be done regarding what such a careful choice would entail. We should find out how students learn in radically alternative organizations, e.g. workers' cooperatives, farming communes or activist organizations. Our examples in this article are certainly not universal, and it would be interesting to know how exactly was students embodied learning generated by precisely these organizations. This also raises the question of passionate affective attachments that our students develop to alternatives but also to capitalist consumerism and work.

Much like singular instances of gender subversion, these placements alone are unlikely to fundamentally shake up capitalist social relations – if that were our goal. We have argued that as learning is shaped by the context in which it happens, if we manage to set the scene for such environments in which regular performances of profit or social orientation almost naturally come under challenge, our students will become readier to accept and hopefully even feel the need to foster further alternatives. In our classrooms, we have to continue giving means for individual and collective reflection on the experiences that students live through during their placement projects, and keep developing their vocabulary of alternatives.

This could make them angrier at us for being out of touch with the polished image of business issues in corporate marketing materials and most textbooks. In this case, not much will change either to the better, or to the worse. However, if they grow angrier of the injustice, inequality, and irresponsibility that litters contemporary businesses *and* we manage to give them an encouraging first-hand experience of how life could be organized differently, that's probably a good thing. Indeed, some of our students who completed their projects in alternative organizations have changed their career aspirations and opted for a move into corporate responsibility, social enterprises, the charity sector and even establishing their own socially oriented start-ups. We think this is a step in the right direction.

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Appendix A – Table of Interviewees

Name	Cohort	Project
AJ (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	CSR - Property Developers
Amit (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Social Enterprise Hub
Geoff (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	CSR department – law firm
Josh (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Social Finance
Kenneth (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	Social Enterprise – Food
Makosi (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR department – Retail
Marc (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	Social Enterprise
Miranda (Postgraduate)	2014-2015	CSR department - Retail
Perez (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	CSR department – law firm
Rasheeda (Postgraduate)	2015-2016	Futurechildren
Rich (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Autonomy – Social Housing
Viviene (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR department – professional services
Zvetlana (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	Business Improvement District

Appendix B – Reflective logs

Name	Cohort	Project
AJ (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	CSR - Property Developers
Amit (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Social Enterprise Hub
Igor (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Social Enterprise – Technology education
Josh (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Social Finance
Mario (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Futurechildren
Stephen (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Charity/Social Enterprise – rehabilitating prisoners
Barry (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	Charity/Social Enterprise – Technology Apprenticeships
Ahmed (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	CSR – Law Firm
Agit (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	Youth Charity
Ava (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	CSR – Law Firm
Christian (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR - Banking
Rich (Undergraduate)	2015-2016	Autonomy – Social Housing
Li Na (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR – Estate Agent
Zvetlana (Undergraduate)	2014-2015	Business Improvement District
John (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR – Media
Li Jing (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR – Retail
Tamvir (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR – Professional Services
Samantha (Undergraduate)	2013-2014	CSR - Retail