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“INTER-COMMUNICATING”: PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMBODIED COMMUNICATION AND CONTEXTUALITY

Abstract: Based on phenomenological perspectives on embodied communication and con-textuality, this paper contributes to a more integral understanding of the constitutive role of communicating in organising and organisations. Relating to the recent turn towards interpreting emergent communication as constitutive for organisation, the paper shows the supplementing role of advanced phenomenology of the body, embodiment and inter-corporeity as well as creative expression for transcending the materialist-idealist dualism and interpreting relational communication. After presenting a phenomenological understanding of embodied communication the status of language as a living process is discussed. Then communication is interpreted as embodied, intentional and responsive practice and as such being part of a specific contextuality in organizations. Finally the process of “inter-communicating” and further implications will be discussed.

Key words: embodiment, phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, context, organisation

Organizational communication has become increasingly important in today's complex, uncertain, and dynamic business environments. The growing rate of competitive challenges imposed by the global economy, the pace of technological changes in products, processes and organizations, the often overwhelming abundance of information and increasing pressures to develop more responsible business¹ are forcing organizations and their members to appreciate the value of communication. In this context, communication is seen as playing a decisive role to increase knowledge sharing, improve satisfaction of employees and customers as well sustainable business practice. As organizational contexts are becoming increasingly fragmented, driven by more refined technologies and in need of new forms of coordination, communication is regarded as a medium for more efficient and flexible acting as a business practice. Currently, different dimensions of organizational communication and multiple perspectives of engaged organizational communication are discussed² while the quest for a common ground³ moves on.

However, often the paradoxes, ambivalences and complexities of processes of communicating are ignored, oversimplified or communication is touted as "panaceas" for all kinds of problems. In many functionalistic organization approaches communication is portrayed as a passive 'variable' to be manipulated, or only as an exchange of information in and out of the organization.⁴ Focusing often on instrumental perspectives more comprehensive questions and problems of ontology, epistemology and ethics with its far-reaching implications in terms of theoretical and empirical work, are often not sufficiently discussed.

A more comprehensive and integral understanding of communication requires investigating it as a situated and active practice, comprising of embodied, emotional, cognitive and social as well as structural and functional elements. The interplay of all these interdependent dimensions constitutes not communication, but by this also organizations or (re)organizing.

For responding to the question on how organizational life is accomplished communicatively,⁵ the specifics of the communication process and its constitutive and meditational role for the very being, operation and development of organisations need to be further investigated, with a post-dualistic and relational ontology.

With the turn towards a more process-oriented understanding in the social sciences, the view of "communication as constitutive" of organisation⁶ has provided a new way of seeing and a new vocabulary for understanding communicational events.⁷

Importantly, this constitutive view enables the portrayal of the flowing activity of communicating as not only an instrumental process of relaying information, but as an essential modality for organizing.⁸ This is seen as a creative and social process which includes its materializing, while transcending the materialist-idealist dualism.⁹ In turn such orientation opens up the interpretation of organizations not only as *reflected* in communication, but as *emerging* in and through communication. According to this perspective, the structuring property and processuality of language and communication is fundamental to how organizational form and life is sustained over space and time¹⁰ and how realities are communicated into being by co-creations of meanings. Drawing from a variety of meta-theoretical theories, and without essentialising nor reducing organization to social interaction, language or discourse, as well as not claiming that communication and organization are equivalent, these perspectives address essential issues of the complexities between communicational and organisational processes.¹¹

Correspondingly, the constitutive orientation can be fruitfully complemented by considering the phenomenological status of embodied communication in a more integral way.

For "communication as constitutive"-oriented approaches, bodies demonstrate the need for considering materiality of communication. Especially the knowledge of the body's meaning is seen as being born of interaction, which brings the material body to social life serving as a base of communication. Accordingly, communication is interpreted as and constrained by an embodied process, while bodies can be transformed as a result of communication. Moreover, "the body becomes a key site for the interpenetration of material and ideational worlds, and communication is how that happens."¹² Accounting for the dynamic transformative interweaving of material and ideational worlds communication is defined "as the ongoing, situated, and embodied process whereby human and non-human agencies interpenetrate ideation and materiality toward meanings that are tangible and axial to organizational existence and organizing phenomena. Put simply, communication means grappling with the dual presence of material and symbolic elements."¹³

An advanced phenomenological approach critically¹⁴ supports this understanding by providing a further refined discernment of experiential qualities of the body, and embodiment, with its co-constitutive and non-cognitive dimensions, like emotional and aesthetic elements involved in communicating.¹⁵

The following will argue that the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty¹⁶ opens up possibilities for a radicalized interpretation of embodiment as essentially constitutive for the nexus of communicating and organising. If communication exists in the borderland between a material embodied

world and the subjective, socio-symbolic world of sense-making,¹⁷ in a co-orientational way,¹⁸ then phenomenology provides a navigation tool for moving into this communicative landscape.

For this, firstly basics of a phenomenological understanding of embodied communication and the status of language as a living process are outlined. Then communication is interpreted as embodied, intentional and responsive practice and as being part of a specific contextuality in organizations. Following a processual turn, finally the concepts of “inter-communicating” and implications will be discussed.

A Phenomenology of Embodied Communication in Organisations

Phenomenologically, the main intention is to go back to constitutive dimensions of communication as a living act of communicating as embedded in its practice. To return to communicating and to its life-worldly situatedness is to turn to that world that embodies the act of communicating, of which it always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language “as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie, or a river is.”¹⁹ Returning to such life-worldly understanding of organization²⁰ and communicating is to relate to a meaningful world, in which embodied communicators meet and co-create their communication, and its various, often ambiguous meanings.

From a phenomenological perspective then, organizations are life-worlds, in which the processes of organizing and communicating take place through experiential, especially embodied and emotional processes.²¹ Phenomenologically, all those involved in communication are first and foremost embodied beings or agencies²² or mediated by the living process of situated embodiment, perception and expression. Thus communication is rooted in and processed through the lived and signification bodies interacting with their respective worlds.²³ Building on a structural linguist approach, Merleau-Ponty emphasises in his post-representational and post-structuralist philosophy the lived perceptual and languaged relation to the other and the world,²⁴ which is bound up in, intertwined with, and never fully separable from what he later calls chiasmatic “flesh,” providing the base for reversibility of the speech and what it signifies.²⁵

For Merleau-Ponty (like matter and mind) perception and language are seen as influencing, guiding and crossing into each other, thus are intimately connected with one another. Linguistic meaning has its roots in embodied, perceptual encounters with the world and its cultural context of action. Specifically, speaking inherently presupposes certain embodied and shared perceptual, as well as emotional and cognitive faculties, interplaying with each other. For example communication and the

achievement of mutual understanding depend upon the perceptual-corporeal practice of listening or visual perception, particularly in face-to-face communication or in the context of different media technologies.²⁶

Furthermore, with Merleau-Ponty we can understand that perception is already inherently communicative; it is a specific form of expression and communion.²⁷ To perceive is a pre-objective communion with the world, which creates meaning and calls forth a response from the perceiver and brings him or her into dialogue with the perceived figures. Perceiving others is not only reflecting an "object," but rather triggers being moved by the meanings of their perceived actions. Thus, perception, inter-action and communication overlap and intertwine.²⁸

Moreover, language is not only structured like perception, but *speech is a prolongation and refinement of perception* that is, linguistic expressions are taking up meanings that are already present in every day events and processing them further by organizing and stylizing them in a unique way. Language, then, is a sublation of the perceptual (while relating back to it), for it takes it up from its contingent structures and open and referential patterns of the perceived and expresses it at a higher level of integration and new forms of present creation.

An extended interpretation of the integral post-dualistic chiasm between embodiment and language,²⁹ of linguistic embodiment and of embodied agents - who are at-grips with things³⁰ - can be used for a deeper understanding of communicating. Particularly it can serve capturing and disclosing a sense of phenomenological presence and presentification³¹ of the interconnected communicative event of "living-in-the-world."³²

Following an advanced phenomenological understanding, embodied communicating beings are both a part of the world and co-extensive with it, constituting but also constituted.³³ This implies that communicating humans find the life-world and their communication meaningful primarily with respect to the ways in which they sense, feel and particularly act bodily within it and in which it acts upon them. Through their embodied, sensual and perceptual selves the communicating subjects are situated in their environment of an organization in a visual, olfactory, auditory and tactile way. Whatever they feel, think, know, do or communicate, they are exposed to a synchronized field of interconnected senses.³⁴ Communication is a multisensory experience, including not only the ears and eyes, but all sensory apparati, including embodied and sensory markers of emotional state.³⁵ Thus, it is through the living body and situated embodiment, in the midst of a world of touch, sight, smell, and sound of organisational life-worlds in which these senses not only make sense,³⁶ but by which communication is being experienced and realised.

Through the sensing and sensed body the communicative members of organisation are situated pre-reflectively and perceive, are orientated and motivated, as well as know and interact communicatively. In a way, their living bodies and embodiment in a social context are their situation; they do their living.³⁷ The incarnate status of the vivid bodily subject and collective embodiment opens the way to a comprehensive phenomenological description and interpretation of the communicating agents and communicative processes and their meaning in organizations.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty offers an inter-subjectivist account from which an interconnection of communicative expression and empathic engagement between self, other, and the world can be extrapolated. As an embodied being the self is constituted in relation to the other within an event of inter-subjectivity that is more than the co-presence of alter egos, but part of the fabric of social becoming.³⁸ Being embedded in a primordial intertwining chiasm of shared reversible "flesh," this embodied intersubjectivity preserves asymmetry, heteronomy and alterity of the other. It is language and communication, which serves as a social medium that brings to expression the mute perception of the sensible. Through this mediation, both are in a constant structuration, constant reversibility and interchange within the human experience of the lived world. The empathic and expressive power of corporeity is not only a condition for social living bonds of communication – that is communicating across the gestures of other bodies – but also provides a medium of transformation from one expressive modality to another. This transformation moves for example from direct vision, audible styles and kinesthetic rhythms of experience to narrated stories or institutionalized records of writing or performances³⁹ or the other way round. In this way the embodied empathy and expressivity are the condition and media for incorporated communication. The involvement inherent in intersubjectivity and mediated communication underscores possibilities for praxial and social transformation that is restructuring by and of the communicative interactions⁴⁰ including (re-)configuring interwoven realities by concrete agents toward various practical ends.⁴¹ To sum up, from a phenomenological perspective, communication is seen as a "function" and emergent process of a bodily subject and embodied inter-subjective and corporeal processes, in which communicating selves and agencies are always already situated as well as in which they take part actively and transformationally in their contextuality.

"Con-+-Texts" and "Con-+-Textuality" of Embodied Communication

On the base of the obtained understanding of communication the following focuses on how communication is embedded and processed

through specific context that gives structure and meaning to what and how communication occurs. In an integral phenomenological and hermeneutical interpretation, con-texts include and process through embodied, emotional and socio-cultural and structural inter-relations in all their multi-layered and joint ("*con-textere*" = joining together) complexity and dynamics. Furthermore, con-textual communicating and communication in con-texts are specific to time, place, sequence, positions and relationships within personal interpersonal and structural relationships. Importantly, the notion of "Con+-Textuality" emphasises here that it is the relationship between an environing "Con~" and expressive "Texts" in an extended sense. In other words "con+-texts" provide the ground, or medium within which communication occurs and it is with and through "con+-textuality" that communicative agents are able to occupy the position of agency. This implies any instance or practice of embodied, affective or communicative acts, gestured, spoken, or written. In this way con+-Texts are creating communication between individuals, objects and patterns of social relationships. Thus, con+-Texts of communication in organisations are an all pervading differential network of "texts" and con-versations⁴² as well as "textures." As such these are embodying emotions, norms and values according to specific local ontologies, which constitute various options of meaning for experiences and expressions. Thus, a con+-textual understanding includes both the explicit and the implicit communicating that is what is said, manifest or symbolic and what is left unsaid or is ineffable; what is re-presented and expressed and what is not-represent(able). Thus it comprises also non-linguistic marks, perceived emotional and indirect or non-discursive forms of meaningful expressions. Therefore a con+-textual approach suggests that communication and its meanings are partially pre-reflexively implicit.⁴³ This kind of implicit meaning comes already before conscious intentions and interpretations explicated positions of any speaker, interpreter or actor, emerge and accompanies them continually. Consequently, inter-relating to and inter-pretating con+-Texts is not only a process, which merely deciphers textual signs or messages and processing meaning consciously. Rather, the inter-pretative relationship is already implicit in the con+-Text itself, which is being spoken, written and read, leaving traces, and influencing further communicative processes. Basically, we can never accede to a lived organisational reality and its flow of experiences without some connection to its con+-Textuality. Understood as a living and intermediating milieu in this con+-Texts there is no clear-cut separation between material-phenomenal and ideational-linguistic spheres or somatic and semantic realms. Like language games, con+-Texts are part of an activity or a "form of life"⁴⁴ that is actual shapes of a distinctive manner and rhythm of living.⁴⁵

Like a “textile” of traces, the threads of the con-+-Text are marked by a constitutive difference, an “ecart” that is an opening dehiscence, and refer endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces.⁴⁶ Similar to the deconstructionist’s much misunderstood assertion, one can say: “*there is no-outside-con-+-Text.*” However, this does not mean to fall into an idealistic or semiotic pan-Textuality or linguistic idealism. Rather, con-+-Texts always relate to sensual, embodied and emotional, thus experiential and material conditions as part of mundane space and time. Meaning in communication cannot be created or determined regardless of the con-text,⁴⁷ i.e., of the ongoing interrelation of texts, con-texts and incessant re-con-Textualisations⁴⁸ also within organisation.

Communication as Embodied Intentional and Responsive Practice in Organisations

As outlined above, the corporeally constituted status of communicating subjects and corresponding intersubjective and corporeal processes with their embodied pre-interpretation and situated embedment, provides the ontological foundations of human communication and acting which in the following will be applied to organizations. The body and embodiment have been addressed only implicitly or marginalized as media in organizational and management practice and theory⁴⁹ and also in functionalistic and instrumental approaches of organisational communication.

In view of the prevailing separation of body and consciousness⁵⁰ and considering the absent presence of the body⁵¹ in social, organizational, management and communication research, there is a need for a remembering between body, embodiment and organizations. This remembrance allows re-integrating lived, embodied experiences and processes of communicating and helps understanding the multidimensional, interactive and dynamic interplay of materiality and symbolism⁵² involved.

Following the “embodied turn” in social and organizational science, advanced phenomenology offers possibilities for developing such an understanding of a (re-)embodied organization⁵³ and a corresponding embodied practice of communication.

All organizing processes of communication involve encounters between bodies that are oriented from or towards a specific point of seeing feeling, hearing or touching and acting in the life-world of organisations. With an intentional and responsive orientation of the bodily organs and consciousness, the agent within the sphere of communication not only feels “I think,” but also “I relate to” or “I do.”⁵⁴ In other words, the atmosphere in which communication is situated is not only what members of organisations think about it, but primarily what they *live*

through with their operative intentionality⁵⁵ within a responsive order.⁵⁶ This implies that the "I can" (or "cannot") precedes and conditions the possibility of the "I know,"⁵⁷ hence "I" or "we" communicate as a performing action and passion.

As a living body, the intentional communicator or groups of communicating agents in organisations not only intend, but also respond to meaningful questions, problems or claims put to him, her or them through situational contexts and embodied conditions in which she or they takes part as embodied beings.⁵⁸ With this understanding of embodied-based communicating there is a close link between what is intended and what is actually given, between identity, intention, the communication situation and corresponding responses in organisations.⁵⁹ Furthermore, such a relationally intentional and actively responsive communication in life-worldly organisation is a dialogical and dialectical process,⁶⁰ encompassing the potential for a critical reflexivity.⁶¹ Thus, communication in organization is a form of identity-related, skilled bodily and embodied practice and experience, all inextricably tied to one another,⁶² for creating meaning through language. Specifically, embodied communication takes place as a temporal and spatial 'inter-val' of in-between as well as involves a syn-chronisation of rhythms.⁶³ With this interpretation investigating processes of communicating in organizations requires capturing a sense of embodied inter-relational practices both as a source, field or realization and outcome of processes of inter-communication.

Processual Turn towards "Inter-Communicating" in Organisations

A processual orientation of communicating radicalizes the relational approach of advanced Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology and ontology. Following a relational orientation it becomes possible to transcend both a possessive individualism and an obsessive objectivism of communication. Communicating is not seen reductively as an identifiable entity *sui generis* based on individuality made objectively measurable, but as a dispersed and inherently indeterminate process, which is continually reconfiguring itself. With a relational intelligibility in place we can shift our attention from what is contained within individuals, communities or organizations to what transpires between people and their "artefacts-in-use" as agencies. With this kind of orientation, communicating becomes factually based on embodied relational processes that are jointly or dialogically structured activities.⁶⁴ Processually, communicating develops out of a complex set of inter-actions or inter-relations *between* "subjects" and "objects," experiences, others and things as an ongoing event. Out of these dynamic intersections then feelings, cognitions and meanings, and communities, as well as artifacts, structures and functions of communicating are

continually created, re-created, questioned and re-negotiated in organisations. All of these constituencies and components of communicating are processed in and through organisations within a relational, chiasmic and reversible *inter-world*.

It is the relational “space between”⁶⁵ with its gaps and interstices⁶⁶ and therein unfolding in-tensions,⁶⁷ which is the birthplace not only of individual and collective identities and social relationships, but also of communication. Moreover, the embodied in-between of communicating is the source for creativity, innovation and added value in organizations. As an intermediating realm in this processual space all parties involved in the communicating process meet in an on-going interwoven activity. Thus, taking a relational perspective means enacting a constellation for communication in which organizational phenomena and the researcher's relationships with them are conceived of as interdependent and impacted.

By recognizing the primacy of relational processes, these become media, in which communicating is continuously created and changed in the course of being practised. Moreover, any communicating always depends on a set of relationships to other communicating processes in continuous, dynamic transformation.⁶⁸

Understanding organizations and communicating phenomena as dynamic constellations of relationships, allows seeing that communication is not substantively fixed or a linear transmission, but rather a shifting cluster of variable elements throughout a decentred, configured lattice. Importantly, in this mesh of what can be called *inter-communicating* as communicative practice is distributed and moves in dynamic sets of relations within powerful historical, embodied and emotional, social and structural dimensions. Thus in communicating, the embodied communicators and their experiences, contents and con-+-Texts, including the involved enabling and constraining structures and non-human agencies, interrelate and co-create each other within an “*inter-world*.” Such processually inter-relational interpretation of inter-communicating provides renewed possibilities for developing richer, more textured, understandings of how the co-constituencies of communication in(ter)corporate each other.

Conclusion: Implications and Perspectives

This paper showed the significance of an advanced phenomenological approach for understanding the inter-relational process of communicating in organizations or through its very organising. Following a phenomenological orientation, the constitutive roles of embodied con-+=Textual dimensions of communicating and processes of inter-communicating were discussed. In describing some of the complexities of a more experiential and inclusive comprehension of organizational

communication, this paper tried not only to reconceive the experiential base of communicating. Rather it also open up new ways of approaching and understanding how communicating takes place and co-evolves as part of interrelated and dynamic organisational practices.

In terms of *methodology*, advanced phenomenology provides avenues for understanding the intricate and relational nature of the processes and patterns of communicating in respectively as organizations. With its qualitative methods, phenomenology can bring the researcher into closer touch with the real world of inter-communicating processes, while recognizing the heterogeneous dimensions involved. As a reminder of the life-world's multifaceted wholeness an integrative phenomenology of communicating serves as a helpful antidote to partial views and reductionist methods. In addition to first-person perspectives,⁶⁹ and embodied research practice,⁷⁰ it would be enriching to extend research towards second- and third-persons (singular and plural forms) for understanding various perspectives of communicating in and by organizations. Depending on the strands in terms of focus of analyzing communicating in relation to organisations, different methods may be chosen and combined within the spectrum of relational research.⁷¹ With regard to the need for a more meta-theoretical approach (Craig, 1999), multi-theoretical integration (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008) and more integral orientation (Leonard, 2004), a methodological diverse and rigorous, but also integrated pluralism (Küpers & Edwards, 2008) allows exploring the complex experiences, processes, and conditions of holonic (Edwards, 2005) communication as and in organisations. Such integrated methodological pluralism can be not only a differentiated reminder of the multifaceted dimensions and complexities, but also a helpful strategic navigation tool for exploring the multilayered landscapes of communicating.

As embodied communicating is intimately linked with implicit and tacit knowing and inter-knowing⁷² and processes of organisational learning, respectively inter-learning,⁷³ these provide further avenues for exploratory and empirical research. Furthermore, bridges to the emergent research on story-telling and narratives in organizations⁷⁴ are worthwhile crossing. Complementary, it would be instructive to pursue further research on how feelings and emotional dimensions influence the way that members of organizations perceive, interpret, resist and evaluate their organizational actions, and hence shape their communicating and how these processes are regulated, ordered and sustained.

Moreover, an integral phenomenological orientation could provide a way of understanding not only with the complexities of communication, but also the paradoxes and ambiguities involved. Based on Merleau-Pontyian intersubjectivist account of praxis, further research on mutual

disagreement and divergence, as well as ethics of communicative engagement between self, other, and world would be meaningful.⁷⁵

By applying varied lenses and perspectives, researchers can examine problems that come along with communicating as part of organisational practices, e.g. by exposing conflicting demands as partially true or complementary, and by demonstrating that apparently opposing orientations or interests are actually interwoven in a comprehensive process and within a continuum. This also implies the role of “inter-leadership”⁷⁶ as one, which is exerting a positive and/or negative influence on organizational communicating.

A specific phenomenological focus can be given to the role and impact of new media technics,⁷⁷ and its embodied virtuality for inter-placed communication and organisation respectively leadership can be considered. Overall, it is hoped that the advanced phenomenological interpretation of communication proposed here may provide possibilities for re-assessing, re-thinking and further investigating the deeper relevance of embodied processes of communicating. By taking the various relational dimensions into account a more comprehensive and innovative understanding of the constitution and development of communicating practices can be attained. Overcoming reductionistic orientations and developing a more multi-dimensional and inclusive research approach towards the lived experience and processes of “inter-communicating,” which incorporates being, knowing, and doing within a social and systemic nexus is a challenging endeavor. Nevertheless, researching further into these interwoven organisational realities are worthwhile undertakings, as they contribute to more integral practices of communicating in and by organizations.

Notes:

¹ W. Küpers, “Integral Responsibility for a Sustainable Practice in Organisations and Management,” in *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management Journal* (2011 forthcoming).

² S. May and D. K. Mumby, *Engaging Organizational Communication Theory and Research: Multiple Perspectives* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

³ S. R. Corman, “The Need for Common Ground,” in *Perspectives on Organizational Communication: Finding Common Ground*, edited by S. R. Corman & M. S. Poole, 1-15. (New York: Guilford, 2000).

⁴ D. K. Mumby and C. Stohl, “Disciplining Organizational Communication: Studies,” in *Management Communication Quarterly* 10 (1996): 50-72; J. R. Taylor, *Rethinking the Theory of Organizational Communication: How to Read an Organization* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993); A. Kersten, “A Critical Interpretive Approach to the

Study of Organizational Communication: Bringing Communication Back into the Field," in *Organization Communication: Emerging Perspectives*, edited by L. Thayer, 133-150 (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1986).

⁵ M. E. Pacanowsky and N. O'Donnell-Trujillo, "Communication and Organizational Culture," in *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (Spring 1982): 122.

⁶ J. R. Taylor and E. J. Van Every, *The Emergent Organization: Communication as its Site and Surface* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000); L.L. Putnam, and A.M. Nicotera, *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁷ F. Cooren et al., eds, *Communication as Organizing: Empirical and Theoretical Explorations in the Dynamic of Text and Conversation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006); J. R. Taylor, "Organizing from the Bottom up? Reflections on the Constitution of Organization in Communication," in *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication*, edited by L. L. Putnam & A. M. Nicotera, 153-186 (New York: Routledge, 2009); R. Bisel, "Forum Introduction: Communication is Constitutive of Organizing," in *Management Communication Quarterly* (February 24, 2010): 122-123.

⁸ Taylor and Every, *The Emergent Organization*.

⁹ K. L. Ashcraft et al., "Constitutional Amendments: 'Materializing' Organizational Communication," in *Academy of Management Annals* 3, no. 1 (2009): 1-64.

¹⁰ F. Cooren and G. T. Fairhurst, "Speech Timing and Spacing: The Phenomenon of Organizational Closure," in *Organization* 11, no. 6 (2004): 793-824; J. R. Taylor and H. Giroux, "The Role of Language in Self-Organizing System," in *Self-Organizing Systems*, edited by G. Barnett & R. Houston, 127-163 (New York: Hampton Press, 2005).

¹¹ L. Putna and A. Nicotera, "Communicative Constitution of Organization is a Question: Critical Issues for Addressing It," in *Management Communication Quarterly* February 24 (2010): 159.

¹² K. L. Ashcraft et al., "Constitutional Amendments" 33.

¹³ Idem, 34-5.

¹⁴ Phenomenologically, the body is more and different than merely a communicative product and the work-body link is not only an "indeterminate relation negotiated in communication" (Ashcraft et al., "Constitutional Amendments" 34-5), but requires an extended and relational understanding of the co-constitutive organizing body and embodied con-Textuality of communicative events involved.

¹⁵ N. Crossley, "Corporeality and Communicative Action: Embodying the Renewal of Critical Theory," in *Body & Society* 3, no. 1 (1997): 28 and 30.

¹⁶ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), and *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ F. Taylor, "Co-Orientation: A Conceptual Framework," in *Communication as Organizing*, edited by F. Cooren, J. R. Taylor, & E. J. Van Every, 141-15 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006).

¹⁸ F. Cooren et al., eds., *Communication as Organizing: Empirical and Theoretical Explorations in the Dynamic of Text and Conversation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 14.

¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, ix.

²⁰ J. Sandberg and G. Dall'Alba, "Returning to Practice anew: A Life-World Perspective," in *Organization Studies* 30, no. 12 (2009): 1349-1368.

²¹ L. R. Gordon and J. M. Martinez, *Communicating Differences: Essays in Phenomenology and Communicative Praxis* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Pub Inc., 2004); R. L. Lanigan, *Phenomenology of Communication: Merleau-Ponty's Thematics in Communicology and Semiology* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1988); C. O. Schrag, *Communicative Praxis and the Space of Subjectivity: Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of perception*, and R. L. Lanigan, "The Phenomenology of Embodiment in Communicology," in *Phenomenology*, edited by L. Embree, L. & T. Nenon, 361-388. Vol. V, Parts I and II, Selected Essays from North America, 5 vols (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2007).

²³ J. Zlatev, "Embodiment, Language and Mimesis," in *Body, Language and Mind*, edited by T. Ziemke, J. Zlatev, & R. Frank, Vol 1: Embodiment, 297-337 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007).

²⁴ In by-passing Saussure's theory of "langue" as ahistorical, universal, fixed homogeneous structure, which explains how speech is enacted, Merleau-Ponty shows the need to consider the actual "parole" as historical, particular, contingent and heterogeneous speech acts. With the latter one he refers to the signified enactment itself and emphasises the embodied and expressive dimension of the signified. The movement between the historically and culturally sedimented field of the already spoken word and the expressive acts transcends and transforms the language and communication. This implies acknowledging language's plurality and opacity as a system of signifiers. For Merleau-Ponty, while langue is a necessary precondition for parole, speech is what activates language, gives it life and makes it move as well as generates meaning for both listener and speaker. Merleau-Ponty conceives speech as an embodied creation of meaning, and often ecstatic intertwining of subjectivities. For him speech is an endlessly renewable creative praxis that activates and reactivates the creative potentials of language itself. The truth inherent in interaction is not hypothetical, an agreement concerning validity claims, but is already fully immanent to the mutual encounter between self, other, and world. Thus, Merleau-Ponty provides in his existential pragmatics a suggestive re-conceptualization of historical, social and cultural praxis, in which freedom is to be found in the open interplay between mutually relating, and mutually soliciting, elements, within an ontological evocation of perpetual genesis of a life-world open to transformation that is restructuring by the communicative interactions of its members (Haysom, 2009: 668).

²⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 154; F. Macke, "Liquidity and Flesh: Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, and the Elements of Interpersonal Communication,"

in *Phenomenology, Selected Essays from North America*, edited by Embree, L. & Nenon, T., 389-424 (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2007). Flesh is Merleau-Ponty's concept for the common mode of being that transgresses the opposition between subject and object, perceiver and perceived, the processual point of origin both of facticity and significance. It would be interesting to compare this ontological key notion with what Cooren calls a plenum (i.e., "full" in Latin) of agencies and action, yielding a (more or less) structured world. This understanding can help overcoming the dualistic structure-agency dialectic, and interpreting organization as milieus, which teem with agencies of various sorts including textual, mechanical, architectural, natural, and human. There seem to be a similar orientation as also Merleau-Ponty's post-Cartesian philosophy and relational ontology can be understood as an "effort to come between traditional philosophy's alternatives of materialism and idealism, empiricism and rationalism, object and subject, and fact and essence" (D. Low, *Merleau-Ponty's Last Vision: A Proposal for the Completion of The Visible and the Invisible* [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000], 16). Focused on bodily experiences and embodiment not as objects or representations, but as constitutive and 'open' media, led Merleau-Ponty to an anti-foundationalism, anti-essentialism and non-dualism, and philosophy of (good) ambiguities, presaging an anticipatory articulation of post-modern themes.

²⁶ Crossley, N., "Corporeality and Communicative Action" 25.

²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 320.

²⁸ Crossley, "Corporeality and Communicative Action" 26.

²⁹ D. Low, "The Body of Merleau-Ponty's Work as a Developing Whole," in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2009): 207-227.

³⁰ S. Taylor, "Embodied Agency," in *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, edited by H. Pietersma, 1-21 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 1989), 7.

³¹ F. Cooren et al., "The Coproduction of Organizational Presence: A Study of Médecins Sans Frontières in Action," in *Human Relations* 61, no. 10 (2008): 1339-1370.

³² R. L. Lanigan, *Phenomenology of Communication: Merleau-Ponty's Thematics in Communicology and Semiology* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1988) and *The Human Science of Communicology: A Phenomenology of Discourse in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1992).

³³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 453.

³⁴ Idem, 207.

³⁵ C. A. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod, *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); E. Ochs and B. Schieffelin, "Language has a Heart," in *Text* 99, no. 1 (1989): 7-25.

³⁶ W. Küpers, "The Sense-Making of the Senses, Perspectives on Embodied Aesthetics & Aesthetics in Organising," in *Aesthetics: International Journal of Art and Aesthetics in Management and Organizational Life* 2, no. II (2009): 33-53.

³⁷ E. T. Gendlin, "The Primacy of the Body, not the Primacy of Perception: How the Body Knows the Situation and Philosophy," in *Man and World* 25, no. 3/4 (1992): 341-353.

³⁸ N. Crossley, *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming* (London: Sage, 1996).

³⁹ A. Mickunas, "Merleau-Ponty Communicative Practice," in *Perspectives on Philosophy of Communication*, edited by Arneson, P. (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007), 156.

⁴⁰ K. Haysom, "Communicating Depth Habermas and Merleau-Ponty on Language and Praxis," in *Political Theory* 37, no. 5 (2009): 668.

⁴¹ Ashcraft et al., "Constitutional Amendments" 42.

⁴² This con-textual understanding of communication can be related to the Montreal School of Communication (J. R. Taylor and D. Robichaud, "Finding the Organization in the Communication: Discourse as Action and Sensemaking," in *Organization* 11, no. 3 (2004): 395-413) according to which it manifests in both (a) a textual modality; and (b) a conversational modality, which are irreducible. While the textual dimension corresponds with the recurring, fairly stable and relatively uneventful (and material) side of communication (e.g., the organization's "surface") and the content of interpretations, the conversational dimension refers to the lively and evolving co-constructive side of communication (i.e., the "site" of organization) as creation of interpretations. The dialectic of text and conversation are "variant expressions for the same reality" (Taylor et al., "The Communicational Basis of Organization," 28). Organization is accomplished (or "real-ized") and experienced in living conversation, identified and described through text. "Texts" may take various recognizable forms – verbal, non-verbal (i.e., gestural and kinesic), and written – that "represent" organization. In other words, an organization is manifest/incarnated in the texts (e.g., documents, spokespersons) that speak in its name and through the conversations (e.g., live exchanges) where these texts are (re)produced. Thus organizations are embodied in communicative interaction, textually and conversationally. Correspondingly, phenomena in embodied organisation have both presumed structural entail predictable, formulaic, and institutionalized (i.e., textual) as well as erratic, emergent, and negotiated (i.e., conversational) dimensions of communication. Although communication and organisation can be seen equivalent McPhee and Zaig ("The Communicative Constitution of Organizations: A Framework for Explanation," in *Electronic Journal of Communication/La Revue Electronique de Communication* 10, no. 1/2 (2000): ¶ 46) warn not to fall in a reductionism: "Organization is not simply communication, but a relationship among distinct types of analytically separable processes, so saying that it 'is communication' is misleading..." According to them the generic communication processes that constitute organization are created by four flows—activity coordination, membership negotiation, self-structuring, and institutional positioning—encompassing what are typically seen as "internal" and "external" matters.

⁴³ Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 115-29.

⁴⁴ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 23.

⁴⁵ I. Marcoulatos, "The Secret Life of Things: Rethinking Social Ontology," in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 33, no. 3 (2003): 260.

⁴⁶ J. Derrida, "Living on: Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, edited by Harold Bloom, 75-176 (New York: Continuum, 1979), 84.

⁴⁷ Idem, 91.

⁴⁸ In "con-+-Texts" each figuration is open for deconfiguration ("de-con-+-Textualization") and reconfiguration ("re-con-+-Textualization"), which is reflecting the life-situation of embodied and narrative communicators and interpreters at a variety of levels. By these re-figurations creations of a new semantic pertinence becomes possible by means of an impertinent attribution. Through re-structuring and re-ordering somatic and semantic fields, emergent meanings are evoked not previously related and employed in particular "con-+-Texts." That is, each "con-+-Text" permits a certain actualization of knowing, communicating and meaning expressed in the embodied, polysemic treasure chest of the "mantic" and semantic media, sedimented in the emplotted con-+-Texts. Therefore, pre-forming con-+-Texts of communication are like open "textures" filled up with sedimentation, memories but also expectations and hopes. Similar as relational "fabrics," they are interwoven by knitting processes of negotiation of meaning twisted by embodied and emotional "threads" and aesthetic patterns. Con-+-Textual speech is a dense bundle of intentional strands that are intricately woven into, in-between, and beyond the human capacities for movement, perception, emotion, and cognition. Thus practices of con-+-Textual speech "not only inform and are informed by the other intentional threads, they also ecstatically traverse these other strands. In sum and in general, of each and any intentional thread or its correlate, speech always can speak in a language it already understands." (C. Anton, "Beyond the Constitutive/Representational Dichotomy: The phenomenological notion of intentionality," in *Communication Theory* 9, no. 1 (1999): 48).

⁴⁹ J. Hassard et al., *Body and Organization* (London: Sage, 2000).

⁵⁰ K. Dale, *Anatomising Embodiment and Organisation Theory* (London: Palgrave, 2001) and "Building a Social Materiality: Spatial and Embodied Politics in Organizational Control," in *Organization* 12, No. 5 (2005): 649-678; K. Dale and G. Burrell, "What Shape Are We in? Organization Theory and the Organized Body," in *Body and Organization*, edited by J. Hassard, R. Holliday & H. Willmott, 15-30 (London: Sage, 2000).

⁵¹ D. Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); C. Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London/Newbury Park/New Delhi: Sage, 1993).

⁵² G. Cheney and K. Ashcraft, "Considering 'the Professional' in Communication Studies: Implications for Theory and Research within and beyond the Boundaries of Organizational Communication," in *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 146-75.

⁵³ A. Styhre, "The (Re)Embodied Organization: Four Perspectives on the Body in Organizations," in *Human Resource Development International* 7, no. 1 (2004): 101-116.

⁵⁴ J. Macmurray, *The Self as Agent* (London: Faber, 1957), 84.

- ⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xviii.
- ⁵⁶ E. T. Gendlin, "The Responsive Order: A New Empiricism," in *Man and World* 30 (1997): 383-411.
- ⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 137.
- ⁵⁸ W. Küpers, "Phenomenology of Aesthetic Organising – Ways towards Aesthetically Responsive Organizations," in *Journal Consumption, Markets and Cultures* 5, no. 1 (2002): 31-68.
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- ⁶⁰ M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 69.
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- ⁶³ N. Crossley, "Corporeality and Communicative Action: Embodying the Renewal of Critical Theory," in *Body & Society* 3, no. 1 (1997): 34.
- ⁶⁴ J. Shotter, *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric, and Knowing of the Third Kind* (Milton Keynes, UK/Toronto, CA.: Open University Press/Toronto University Press, 1993); R. Stacey, *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations: Learning and Knowledge Creation* (London: Routledge, 2001) and "Learning as an Activity of Interdependent People," in *The Learning Organization* 10 (2003): 325-331.
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