

First musings
on
Organizational Analysis

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- B. The strange efficacy of analytic listening
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The main purpose of this meeting is to present a more or less structured idea of what an “organizational analysis” could be and then have a debate about it. But hopefully this discussion is also useful for us to think about our own organization.

It is okay if we don't cover all the points here: the main goal is to present just enough to get us into a more productive conversation about what sort of procedure could be developed to simultaneously help other organizations and further our political cause. If we are short on time, I will cut out section 3 - and I invite people who want to learn more about STP's previous work to get in touch with me or others and arrange one to one meetings!

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To me, the relation between politics and psychoanalysis is very tense: I have developed a serious allergy to using analytic concepts to describe large-scale social dynamics and I do not believe we know enough about the theoretical underpinnings of our practice to generalize them without exaggerated philosophical handwaving. However, I believe psychoanalysis produces very precious effects and I do think there are lessons there for political practice.

So the reasoning here is: to bypass most of the theoretical debate around politics and psychoanalysis and describe a "core" analytic experience that concerns listening, transference and symbolization. With this description in view, we will try to understand what are the restrictions to analytic practice and what it might mean to preserve these core traits as we look for other analytic arrangements.

It is worth mentioning two experiments that inform this approach: the Testimony Clinic (TC) and the Circle of Studies of Ideas and Ideology (CSII). From the first comes the intuition that it takes a procedure of a certain form to actualize some types of otherness. From the second comes the intuition that the disjunction between the organized and the organization is a potentially productive one.

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The connections between marxism and psychoanalysis usually take place at the theoretical level - and when it has practical import, it is usually at the benefit of one of the two fields: either clinical practice needs to push political ideals, or it is used as an ideal for political practice.

To learn from the actual practice of psychoanalysis means to accept, first of all, that **it is what analysts do - and the concepts that help them do it - that constitute the core contribution psychoanalysis can make to politics**, not a general theory that explains social reality.

In the case of the work of Jacques Lacan, the disjunction is very evident: **most of the concepts that help clinical practice (transference, empty and full speech, free floating attention, free association, resistance, etc) have not been mobilized by political organizing**, while the big theory ideas with no practical import (discourse theory, the metaphysics of the drives, etc) are constantly used to increment political philosophy.

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Even though the vulgata claims that psychoanalysis is the “talking cure”, the emphasis on speech can mislead us, as **the best way to evaluate advancements in the clinic is in terms of listening**: interventions are meant to make people listen to themselves better (rather than say previously unsayable things) and the end of analysis is best understood as learning to listen to others.

Furthermore, **successful interventions in psychoanalysis have some strange properties**: (1) not doing anything can be an intervention, (2) interventions do not need to be consciously or cognitively apprehended by the patient (3) often interventions get lost in retrospection (4) they extract associative resources out of associal structures in the patient’s world.

Psychoanalysis usually is described as a process that happens between analyst and analysand, but Lacan’s own concept of the end of analysis requires us to add, as part of a criteria of cure, **the displacement, mediated by the analyst, from a partnership between analysand and an idealized other to a partnership between analysand and the analytic community**.

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From the materialist point of view, the most crucial category amongst the “four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis” (transference, unconscious, repetition, drive) is **transference: it is the only one whose operation minimally coincides with that of the practice of psychoanalysis**: entry into transference, its handling and the liquidation of transference as the endgame of analysis.

Transference names the process through which, in response to the rule of free association, patients establish relational patterns with their analysts that have been created elsewhere and which are equally associated to contexts where what was desired of them is unclear. It therefore does not concern so much what the analysand imputes or projects onto the analyst, so much as the affective relation that connects them when a concrete connection is missing.

The crucial distinction, for both Freud and Lacan, is the one between making statements or interventions aimed at pointing out what has been transferred (“analyzing transference”) and between using the transferential language to allow something to be heard (“analyzing from within transference”). Transference is the concept that clarifies why psychoanalysis is first and foremost an associative rather than cognitive practice: one must inhabit the patient’s love language and, from within it, offer possibly new connections between how they parse the world and what has happened to them.

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Two crucial limitations are recognizable in psychoanalysis when seen from the standpoint of transference: (1) despite some interesting experiments, its effectiveness relies on its dual character; (2) it is able to intervene on traumas connected to love and the world of affinity above anything else. The two limitations are connected: **if love is essentially a dual relation, then the dyad is the appropriate space for transference.**

Work done in the STP also suggests that, **historically, the emergence of psychoanalysis is modern Europe is contemporary of the appearance of family structures that “fall short” of the atom of kinship**, in such a way that it is up to individuals to “decode” explanations regarding the indeterminate dimension of social affinity that have no proper ground (what Lacan calls “fantasy”). This hypothesis allows us to recuperate the social character of some fundamental concepts while recognizing why they are historically fixated at a sub-social scale.

Psychoanalysis does produce recognizable results and it constitutes a truly singular practice - we could do well to consider how analytic processes work if we are looking for **ways to interact with other organizations that (1) do more than explicate theory, (2) connect increase in the other's autonomy with increased capacity for heteronomy (3) apply to other organizations as much as to ourselves.**

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The point of adding this section is to deal with the question: "**do our conceptual tools help us conceive of a better passage between psychoanalysis and politics?**"

The short answer is "yes". **The basic principle behind transference** - i.e. that "in the last resort no one can be slain *in absentia*" (Freud) - can be unfolded into the thesis that there must be a formal homogeneity between the thing being treated (love trauma) and the treatment (the clinical space), and this is itself a case of the basic principle of "**organizational trinitarianism**" we have developed: how things are composed affects what is intelligible to it and what it gets to interact (which in terms affects its composition, etc).

The organizational approach to psychoanalysis (1) helps to situate how far comparisons between politics and psychoanalysis can go; (2) is a promising way of thinking about the social history of psychoanalysis; (3) opens a new route for debating the question of the "subject", where the category is more at home in the analysis of consistent organizational structures than in its psychoanalytic application.

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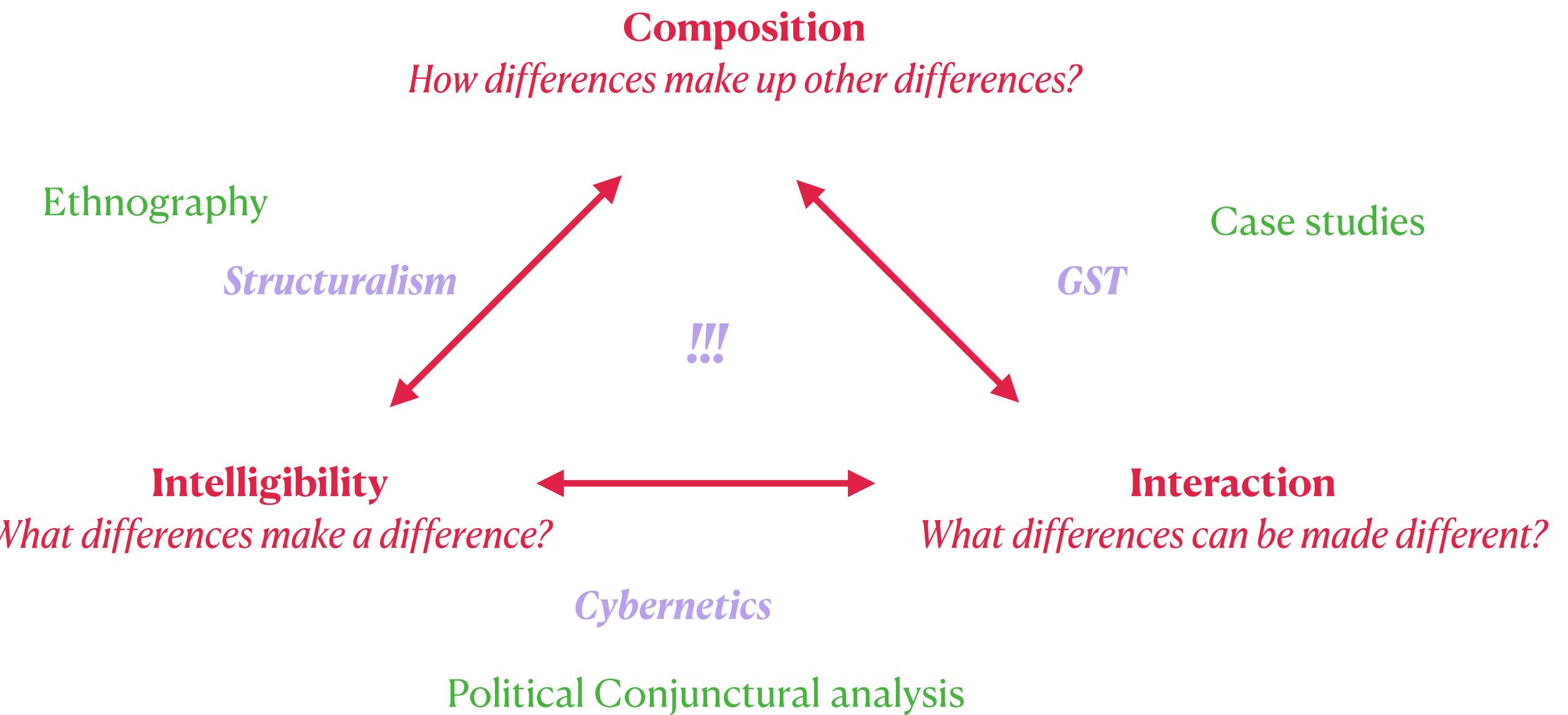
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Organizational trinitarianism claims that to approach something from the organizational point of view means to approach it in such a way that the three sides of this diagram are considered to be equivalent or strictly codependent in some way. How something is put together (what counts as its parts) conditions what it can do (what it can change) and what appears as significant to it (what it can see), in circular fashion.

We can use this diagram to situate different formal tools used by previous theories of organization (structuralism, cybernetics, general systems theory) or the different privileged approaches to analysis (ethnography, political analysis, clinical work).

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Objective phenomenology is based on the claim that entities appear to other entities of the same world - that is, that "phenomenology" is just a structure seen from the standpoint of one of its functional or logical parts. We can ask how the solar system appears to a planet, or how a room appears to a thermostat, etc.

In our unpublished manuscript *Primer on Political Phenomenology*, we proposed a new reading of Marx's theory of value based on this very principle, showing that the logical unfolding of the money-form is equivalent to the construction of a "social sensor" capable of differentiating relations between commodities. The underlying principle of this reconstruction of the "universal property" of money is broader than the logic of value and can be applied both to other social logics and to any collective organization, offering a generalized theory of what a "social metric" can be - a way to sense social reality.

Psychoanalytic practice itself can be reconstructed in similar terms, as a process through which, through the handling of transference, a certain love relation is distorted to the point that new libidinal objects can be "seen" by the language of the patient's world.

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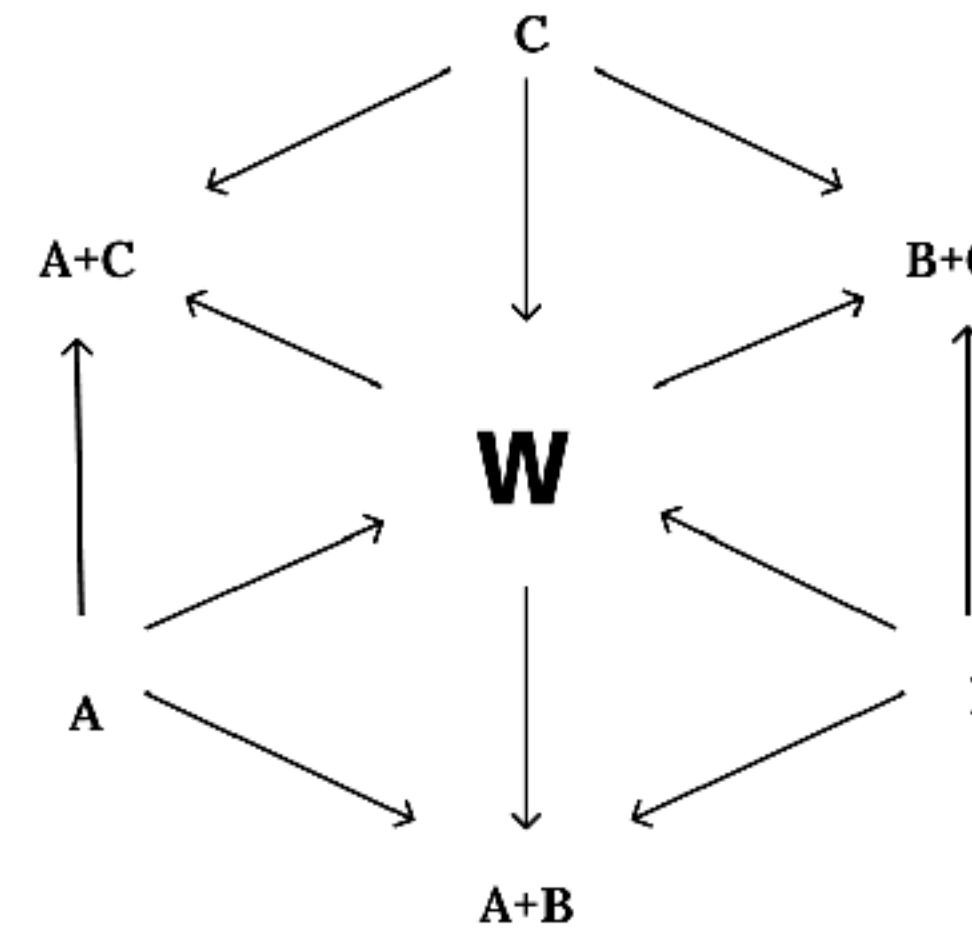
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We define "social world" a common logical space woven out of people's relations, that includes both natural and cultural objects and that ties its logical consistency to the effective material existence of those caught up in it.

We distinguish the three well-established social logics (affinity, property, value) purely in terms of the logical matrices they unfold (paraconsistent, classical, intuitionistic logics).

We show that these social logics cannot form consistent worlds of their own, only combinations of them - which still does not prevent inconsistencies, but constrain their reach. Combinations of these three logics form "multilayered social worlds".

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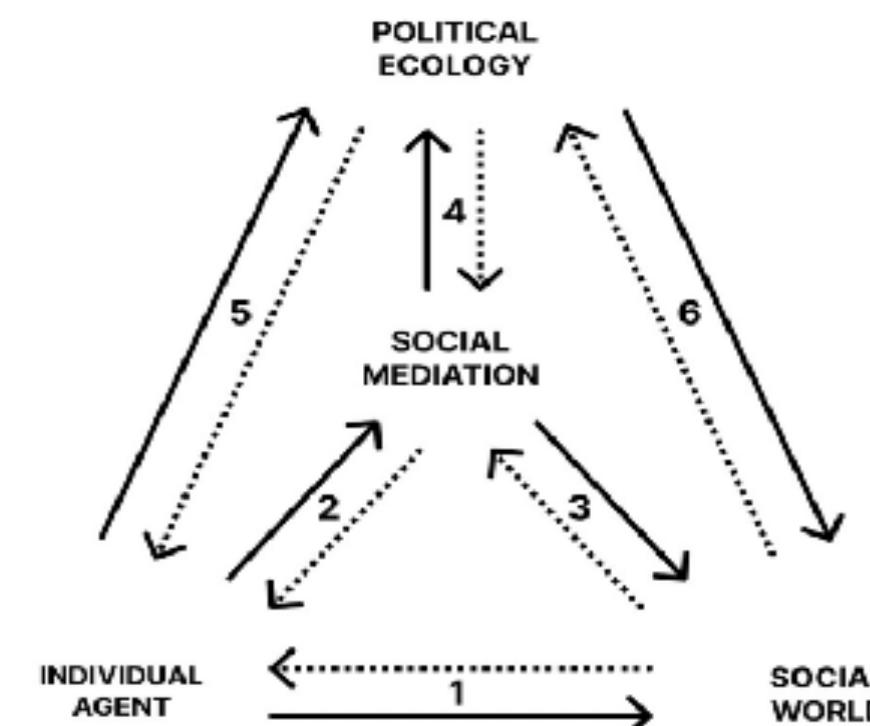
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Political novelty is defined, for us, as the introduction of new forms of association between people that (1) provide new mediated perspectives on the social world (when you engage with such an organization, you see the world differently) and (2) are themselves constrained by their association with a higher order space of other organizations (the organization is itself “seen” under the light of the political movement it is a part of).

Such definition brings together the theory of organizational trinitarianism, the principle of objective phenomenology and takes into consideration the complexity of layered social worlds - adding to it a double challenge: **that whoever seeks to observe the new allow oneself to compose with it and that whatever seeks to be new allow itself to be seen by a political movement or ecology.**

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A crucial question behind this whole endeavor is whether there exist problems that concern strictly the arena of political organizing - that is, impasses that cannot be reduced to individual behavior, to administrative questions, the handling of oppositional forces or even poor strategic judgement. In the terms of *The Hustle of the Struggle*, we could ask if there are political "failures", rather than just "defeats".

It is impossible to define what is abnormal without some concept of normality, and it is even harder to do so when the criteria of comparison is a form of social practice that already strives to deviate from established social prescriptions. Organizational pathologies, in the context of political organizing, might therefore include both the effective reproduction of well-established social logics within a political space as well as the incapacity to tell these two apart (even when the distinction is operative).

The relation of organizational problems or failures to the interior of a political process bears some resemblance to Freud's definition of the "drives" as a constant pressure the organism places on itself, due to the somatic nature of its own representational system, and which therefore finds no real object in the world to appease it. Albeit the crucial differences, this comparison invites us to think about the way political organizations are faced with "otherworldly" goals, promoted by the movement itself, that often only pathological dynamics can help militants bear.

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- The conditions to recognize ourselves as political actors do not necessarily match the best conditions to act politically. However, to judge the political value or effectivity of an action - if we want to lean on the action over the identity of the actors - an organization must be able to occupy an organizational point of view from which it could sense the difference that such action could make.

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It is possible that the way an organization maps its own situation and defines what it can or should do in this context does not respect or at least consider its effective organizational capacities. Often political language is more amply shared than social conditions for action, so organizations form larger clusters only at the level of discourse while failing to recognize or construct concrete points of joint intervention (common environments).

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One of the core sources of the “constant pressure” that emerges in political organizing is the structural fact of complex cooperation itself, that is, the different types of mismatch between people and the space of people’s association - in terms of information, dynamics, general work capacity, etc. While every collective organization seeks to exploit this excessive or autonomous dimension in some way, only in political life is the destiny of this collective excess without a proper object.

What we have elsewhere called the “thinking” of an organization is nothing but what a given group of people manage to do with this excess of cooperation. If this terminology holds, then we could say that political organizations, insofar as the organized are unaware of their own practices, do have unconscious thoughts.

At the same time, one can conceive of a political organization as the site of a clash between social and political organization - very much in the terms suggested by *The Hustle of the Struggle* in the double figure of the worker-militant and the militant-worker. This further complicates the mismatch between being organized and the organization, as the latter can also serve as means to satisfy some pressure faced by the individual in their social lives - as well as a hindrance to that satisfaction.

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The previous impasse concerns two standpoints that nevertheless belong to the same group - the point of view of actors and of actions - while here we see **the mismatch between the point of view of an organization itself and the point of view of the movement of which it is a part.**

As with all of the previous pathologies, these are not deviant positions that could be corrected to the "proper" conduct: they are "paradox-ridden deviations from a norm that doesn't exist" (Zupancic) - meaning, they are legitimate, even if costly or impractical solutions to a real impasse. That one might appeal to theory or old traditional slogans to establish connections between a small ineffective group and a larger political movement is symptomatic - but that means that there is some truth to it, not mere illusion.

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Sometimes organizations might produce effective results in a domain that the group does not recognize as important or central - at least from the perspective of the ideals that hold it together **It is sometimes possible to transform political identity to better use its actual political capacity.**

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Though the inversion and even uncoupling between means and ends of political life can have seriously pernicious effects to a political process, they are also potentially useful phenomena that allow organizations to treat themselves as accessible objects (of fruition, knowledge, etc).

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(We could definitely make a longer and more organized list of structural and material mismatches that we can derive from our theoretical framework and that real world political organizing needs to solve in singular - and sometimes symptomatic - ways)

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The more prescriptive analogy with psychoanalysis here would be:

- (1) In political organizing, we engage with a basic normative principle to associate with others in non-trivial ways.
- (2) If this normative principle was fully articulatable, it would be socially trivial, hence to be what it is, we cannot spell it out fully.
- (3) In this context, organized militants create additional practices, rituals, composite layers, to their organizations, in order to give form and solve the different impasses that such political "hole" has pierced in their world.
- (4) Organizational analysis would function, generally, as a way to add more structure - the "analyzer" structure - to a organization or political ecology to allow it to develop a political language that can both recognize the invisible solutions it has already provided to its problems as well as better formulate impasses that it has unknowingly produced.

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We can have a general discussion about these three points, but for now I just hope to have helped to pose the issue of what “organizational analysis” could be, its challenges, etc, and we can perhaps have separate meetings to think about appropriate analytic procedures with people interested in this project.

Interesting topics here:

- > treating militants x treating organizations
- > how to discover what parts are effective in a complex system?
- > from mode A-analysis to complex analysis: several mediums, mixed
- > to add ourselves to an organization is to create a latch to a political body?