Reflections on how art can put critical performativity to work in Management Education and connections with the "performativity dilemma"

Flamand, Guillaume

Doctorant, Université Paris Dauphine – Dauphine Recherches en Management (DRM)

CNRS UMR 7088, Equipe Marchés, Organisations, Sociétés, Technologies (MOST)

flamand.guillaume@orange.fr

Résumé :

We advance a *"double performativity"* is expected from Management Education. Building on the foundations of performativity, we argue this institution's performativity can only occur through its agents – who we qualify as *per-formateurs* – using successful performatives. From there, we explain how management educators are faced with a *"performativity dilemma"*, *i.e.* the extent to which management educators want to, and are legitimate to, shape management students through management theories and discourses; we in particular focus on management educators who are interested in Critical Management Education (CME). Through a critical and French sociology framework, we question whether, as many critical management educators believe, critical ideas can be shared through "critical performativity".

In this empirical qualitative paper based on an artistic experiment, we determine whether or not art can help put critical performativity to work in the Management Education context. We use an ethnographic posture both in the academic world and during the workshop, combined with interviews.

We show how not respecting conditions of successful (critical) performatives – that is a) wanting to be (critically) performative, b) using a transparent (critical) performative process and c) using codes and social references easy to understand for all –, complemented with us not being critical in critical terms when animating the sessions – for instance using a) *"critical taylorism"* and b) hoping for an *"insidious (critical) performativity"* – led to critical performativity at best not fully occurring, largely because we did not take an open and transparent critical stance towards the performativity dilemma.

Mots-clés : critical performativity, Critical Management Education, Art & Management, performativity dilemma, *per-formateurs*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Management Education has an important effect in shaping future managers and *a fortiori* in influencing society; in fact, the effect may never have been so strong (Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, Dolle, & Shulman, 2011). In French, management educators are often referred to not as professors but as "*formateurs*". A polysemous word: it means to "educate" and to transfer knowledge or skills, but also implies that a "shaping" phenomenon is at play: "*formateurs*" shape (*fr: former*) individuals to give them a certain "form" (*fr: forme*). While this is all the more rational, Critical Management Education (CME) (e.g. French & Grey, 1996) and scholars from other fields have started to ask whether or not it was indeed management educators' role and normal posture − this is in fact true of "professors" in general and not limited to management ones − to impose certain visions and theories, therefore contributing to their re-production (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Grey & Willmott, 2002; Reynolds, 1999), in a "performative" way (Austin, 1975; Bourdieu, 2001; Ghoshal, 2005). We could say "*formateurs*" are "*per-formateurs*"; the French word becomes closer to both "performativity", closer to "performer" which is somehow what a management educator is, and closer to the verb to "perform" in the artistic performance sense of it.

Per-formateurs would be those who use their language and discourse − two elements scholars use a lot − to "shape" (*fr: former*) the individuals in the management classrooms who also happen to be future (sometimes top) managers, *i.e.* management educators are "*per-formateurs*" who shape individuals through their discourse and contribute to produce the reality they describe and teach; by saying something, they contribute to doing something.

Some have advanced critical approaches should be affirmative and performative, potential focused and normative (Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009). Complemented with some thinking about how to be "critically performative" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), this could lead some to want to systematically "impose" critical elements in Management Education (Grey, 2004), something not every management learner seems to be looking for and which does not seem easy to achieve (Fenwick, 2005; Hagen, Miller, & Johnson, 2003; Sinclair, 2007). We also know management students to be interested in learning, or to need to learn, specific

elements such as techniques – "management as a technical practice" is an important social paradigm and ideology, largely created because the use of a scientific management knowledge helps to legitimize management (Grey, 1997) – since, basically, many students see Management Education as a means to an end, *i.e.* their career development (Vaara & Faÿ, 2012). A "criticalization issue" seems to appear: is Management Education – and its agents, management educators – legitimate to impose, through performative techniques, a critical thinking to the individuals it trains, while this may not be their (at least first and main) objective? If we admit it is necessary and legitimate, how can we "put critical performativity to work" in Management Education without entailing a performativity dilemma among management educators?

In this empirical paper, we want to look at Management Education's strategy and posture towards performativity, and in particular the critical one. Yet, this mostly forgotten question – there are exceptions even though it is not always directly considered through the "performative lens" (e.g. Fenwick, 2005; Huault & Perret, 2011; Reynolds, 1999) – is potentially impactful as this institution actually trains future organizational elites and strategists. Here, we do not look at performativity in strategic management itself, but at the performativity that may or may not affect the individuals in charge of it. Through the analysis of an artistic experiment in Management Education, we want to study whether or not art can put critical performativity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Spicer et al., 2009) to work in Management Education, and more largely, try to determine conditions required for critical performativity to be critically put to work in this context – with the associated questions.

Our process will lead us to demonstrate there is a *performativity* of Management Education; we advance there is a *"double performativity"* within this institution: a) it shapes students in a certain way and b) by extension, it influences their future actions and therefore entails managerial practices. However, we want to come back to the foundations of thinking about performativity (Austin, 1975), something rarely considered in organization theory research, to show *performativity* at this institutional level is based on *performatives* uttered at an individual level, by management educators (*per-formateurs*). We will show performativity (whether critical or not), at the institutional level, and at least in this context although this may have a broader application, requires successful performatives used at the individual level. At the individual level, we will remind performatives can only succeed a) if the "speaker" wants to be performative, b) if the performative process is transparent so as to be identified and c) if the environment is able to understand it (notably through the sharing of mutual codes and

social references); this derives from Austin's lectures (1975). We will first try to determine whether our experiment fitted "conditions" of critical performativity (Spicer et al., 2009), before showing we failed in being fully (critically) performative because we did not respect the earlier reminded conditions of performatives. We advance a critical performativity can only be put to work a) when critical performatives are successfully used at the individual level, b) when both the *process* (or method) and the *content* (or critical intent) are critical and mobilized in a critical way, which c) somehow requires management educators to openly and transparently assume a critical stance towards the performativity dilemma, *i.e.* to want to, and openly and transparently affirm wanting to, critically shape students. Our empirical analysis will illustrate a situation where we focused too much on the process through which we wanted to produce critical content, and through a not so critical process according to CME's expectations (e.g. French & Grey, 1996), which led the whole experience to not be critically performative; we may have used what we refer to as *"critical taylorism"*. We may have hoped an *"insidious (critical) performativity"* would allow us to put critical performativity to work. We explain why critical performativity will have much more chance of occurring when one opts for a *"transparent performative process"*. We argue critical performativity can only be put to work, in Management Education, through a truly critical logic.

We offer such an analysis through a critical perspective drawing from Critical Management Studies (CMS) and from Critical Management Education (CME) (e.g. Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007; Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2011; Alvesson & Deetz, 2006; Fenwick, 2005; Fournier & Grey, 2000; French & Grey, 1996; Grey & Willmott, 2002; Huault & Perret, 2009, 2011; Parker & Thomas, 2011; Reynolds, 1999), but also from French sociology (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1979, 1984, 1989, 2001, 2002; Lahire, 2013) and the philosophy of language (Austin, 1975). We discover putting critical performativity to work in Management Education brings many questions with regards to how much Management Educators can (critically) influence and shape their students, as the formers' performative capabilities are associated with a *"performativity dilemma"* of (Critical) Management Educators, *i.e.* the extent to which management educators want to, and are legitimate to, shape management students through management theories and discourses. We argue this performativity dilemma is particularly salient – and in fact entailed – when it comes to trying to integrate critical performativity into Management Education, as introducing critical approaches in this environment already implies dealing with many dilemmas, such as the

potential negative consequences of such projects (e.g. Fenwick, 2005; Huault & Perret, 2011; Sinclair, 2007).

2. THE "PERFORMATIVITY DILEMMA" OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Before discussing how to put critical performativity to work in Management Education, we need to study Management Education's posture towards performativity. We will show a) there is an almost "natural" performativity of Management Education, b) which requires its agents – management educators –, who are in a very favourable position to do so, to be performative; yet, c) management educators are faced with a "performativity dilemma".

2. 1. ON THE PERFORMATIVITY OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

From Austin (1975) to recent papers, many have debated about performativity which is a complex tricky notion that may very well have as many definitions as there are scholars.

2. 1. 1. What "performativity" is and what "performatives" are

Austin (1975) first introduced "performative utterances" as those at play when "to say something is to do something" (*e.g.* when someone declares a session opened). Social sciences quickly ceased the expression to widen its meaning; arguably, "performativity" is what happens when some form of discourse contributes to produce and entail the reality it describes (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Bourdieu, 2001; Callon, 2010; Chia & Holt, 2008; MacKenzie, Muniesa, & Siu, 2007; Sturdy & Fleming, 2003) – we should note how not only text but also buildings, pictures, artworks or symbols are elements of discourse; basically, everything with a meaning or sense is discourse (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004).

Not everyone or everything can be performative, even though almost anything is currently seen as "performative". Performative have felicity conditions, as indicated by Austin (1975). First, in order for performatives to be "successful", speakers should be individuals in a situation where they have the power and legitimacy to use their performative. Austin also advanced it was important that the persons to whom the performative is destined are able to understand the procedure and accept it as legitimate, for the performative to produce its performative effect; this refers to the "mutual codes and social references" we evoked a few lines ago. Otherwise, the performative is bound to fail. Austin also distinguished between "explicit" performatives and the other ones, less clear and less obvious. He already indicated that the "utterance" was usually complemented by other actions such as gestures, which means "discourse" is not only the utterance (the "word") itself (see also Phillips et al., 2004).

Bourdieu (2001), who was convinced the notion of "performative" was pertinent although he believed Austin had forgotten to take into account sociological elements, added to our understanding of the concept. According to him, for a performative to be "happy", *i.e.* to produce its performative effects, more than simple linguistics is required since linguistically speaking, pretty much everyone can say anything but it is the "effect" that might not be the one intended when one is not in a position to use the performative (Bourdieu, 2001, pp. 107–113 notably). A subordinate can give an order to a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), but chances are it will not "work". We should already note this does not mean – this might in fact be a limitation of Bourdieu's contribution – the CEO would not be impacted by such comment and would not search for explanations. When someone, for instance, refuses to obey an order, it is reasonable to believe most people would try to understand why that happened. Therefore, the performative is not entirely "happy", but it still produces social effects, *i.e.* it is partially performative since it affects social reality even though not in the way originally intended. Anyway, what Bourdieu brought to the debate is mostly that for the performative to produce its effect, speakers need to be recognized, appointed, mandated etc. by an institution, and speakers and receivers need to be in a pertinent situation.

It should be noted theories – in particular when uttered by legitimate individuals – have been described as being performative, *i.e.* they contribute to the production of the social reality (and attached practices) they describe, notably through Management Education and academic knowledge (Bourdieu, 2001; Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Huault & Rainelli-Le Montagner, 2009).

Arguably, there is a difference between *performatives* and *performativity*: performatives are speech actions taking place at an *individual* level which can "do something" because "something is said", and the aggregation of these actions can lead to performativity at a *more global* level which means discourse creates or entails the (social) reality it describes. It should also be noted a single performative can generate performativity. Bourdieu detailed why there was much chance for the performative to *shape* reality when it is uttered in a powerful institutionalized context. We can now turn to Management Education's performativity.

2.1.2. Is there a "performativity" of Management Education?

Therefore, we consider a management educator, agents of Management Education, to be a *per-formateur*, *i.e.* individuals who shape students through their discourse and who can contribute to produce the (scientific) reality they describe and teach.

Actually, we advance a (management) educator is a potentially *"hyper-performative individual"*, *i.e.* someone who highly succeeds in manipulating performatives (probably of numerous kinds) relatively to its objectives (*e.g.* shaping future managers in a certain way); here, we should note the question of *who* or *what* defines the relevant objective is already a potential source of issues. When *per-formateurs* succeed in being performative – in management training programmes, but also through other means of discourse such as research, books, other types of communications or consulting etc. –, Management Education's performativity can occur.

2.1.3. Favourable institutional conditions for performativity

First of all, management educators – as all "professors" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1989, 2001) – largely rely on "text" and discourse – in a broad sense (Phillips et al., 2004) but in particular on orally delivered discourses largely based on scientific texts – when they teach, with both the institutionalized legitimacy, conferred and reminded authority, and belief in the logic to do so, and a favourable context. Basically, each element of discourse emanating from a management educator identified as such should by definition potentially impact students – or anyone exposed to this discourse – who would, eventually, act in ways influenced by this discourse.

Management Education is indeed a strong institution with much power and effect over society (Colby et al., 2011; Ghoshal, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). It "delegates" such power to management educators so they can teach theories, spread managerial ideas and concepts, and train future managerial elites. According to many, Management Education was established so as to allow for the acquisition of a social status (in particular professional) by and for managers (Bourdieu, 1989; Grey & Willmott, 2002, p. 413). By "nominating" professors or asking individuals to *perform* teaching hours, Business Schools and Universities transfer their legitimacy to such individuals. Even though some may argue the professorial legitimacy is not what it used to be anymore, we could argue Management Education and its agents are less at risk of seeing their legitimacy questioned than in other areas and University departments. Indeed, "effort justification" (for a recent interesting discussion, see notably Kamau, 2013) could explain – either because the "initiation" is difficult (it is not easy for students to join a Business School) or because of the projected "rewards" students expect from their business training – why it is not unreasonable to assume Management Education, and *a fortiori* management educators, to be under less or lighter critiques than other similar institutions.

Moreover, for many students, being critical of Management Education and Management is almost individually counterproductive.

Even management educators' speech content is supposed to be, by nature and definition, legitimate. Indeed, management educators are either teaching theory that is supposed to be "scientific" – a much debated issue though, since the 1970s and not only in the field of management (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; see notably: Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 2002; Chia & Holt, 2008; Colby et al., 2011; Ghoshal, 2005; Grey, 1997; Wetherbe & Eckhardt, 2014) – since it comes from "legitimate" knowledge published in edited books and scientific journals, whose readings are largely assigned to management students. When the management educator is not an academic but someone from the Business world, it is a) invested by the institution and its academics and b) often looked at as "an example to inspire from" by students willing and wishing to "join the Business world"; therefore, the phenomenon is here simply one of an additional level of delegation.

Consequently, Management Education's agents are in a very favourable situation when it comes to being performative. Both their position and the content of their speech highly satisfy what would be required for performativity to occur. It is even naturally expected of professors that they "shape" students in a form consistent with what Business and society expect (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Vaara & Faÿ, 2012; Wetherbe & Eckhardt, 2014); hence, the *per-formateurs* and by extension Management Education's performativity.

But is this an issue? Isn't it natural that management educators shape individuals this way? We now need to look at this question in order to discuss the "performativity dilemma" of management educators. We reflect on critical management educators, for whom the performativity dilemma is arguably even stronger in particular when it comes to "putting critical performativity to work" – since they want to shape critical individuals, which requires being performative.

We will detail our methodology later, but assuming an ethnographic posture in this environment from the start of our research led to us to collect a large amount of data indicating the "double performativity" of Management Education, and the expectations of performative processes by its agents. For instance, many syllabi claim they will "develop future organizational leaders" or "train future proactive managers", through a bunch of classes and readings which is the first performativity, *i.e.* shaping students in a certain way. Managerial practices of new managers tend to inspire from what they "learned" during management classes, such as the use of, or reference to, famous management "models" and

theories – for instance Michal Porter five forces, or references to and inspiration from "leadership styles". Our ethnography and professional experience sometimes led us to be in contact with individuals from the Business world whose use of, and reference to, such concepts was quite intense. Such behaviours indicate the second performativity, *i.e*. Management Education influences future actions and therefore entails managerial practices.

2.2. IS THERE A "PERFORMATIVITY DILEMMA" OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION?

We have established management educators were agents, acting in the context of a powerful and legitimate Management Education institution expected to be *doubly performative*. Such situation is socially accepted, even on global scales (Vaara & Faÿ, 2012). But, for the individuals in charge or reproducing the *status quo* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1989), *i.e.* for management educators, many questions can arise. There arguably is a gap between society's expectations in terms of performative intensity by Management Education (and its agents), and the type and intensity of performativity its agents (management educators) wish to mobilize.

Debate on the *performative intensity* and *type of performativity* expected from Management Education and its agents (through their performative actions) is vivid. Businesses and society expect management educators to be "*hyper-performative*" individuals, they expect Management Education to manage to (efficiently) shape – through its agents – management students, in particular in a "certain" way compatible with their needs. To be "*hyper-performative*" would therefore mean to be particularly efficient at being performative. For some, Management Education is hyper-performative (e.g. Ghoshal, 2005). Yet, many seem to believe Management Education to be mostly *"hypo-performative"*, *i.e.* to not reach a "sufficient" level of performativity. Indeed, much research indicates Management Education would have no effect at all, or at least not the desired ones (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009). Ten years after Bennis and O'Toole's article (2005) in what probably is the most practitioner-oriented though largely academic based journal, *i.e.* the Harvard Business Review, Wetherbe and Eckhardt (2014) indicate: "Nearly 10 years after the article was published, we believe this problem is even more acute, and that as such business schools need to get serious about making research more relevant to business."; they go on to offer many possible solutions such as using methods similar to medical *translational research* which "takes scientific research conducted in the lab and makes it useful to people. Fully integrated translational research faculty are tenured professors who practice medicine and use the latest scientific techniques to answer questions about those techniques from

practicing physicians. […] In evaluating faculty performance, include business consulting activity (that comes out of research) and its impact on businesses." Clearly, suggestions not far from what we refer to as a "performative" Business School and Management Education.

This chiasm could in fact be due to the *"performativity dilemma"*, largely grounded in the gap between the view(s) management educators (*i.e.* scholars) have of themselves or of their objective as such professionals, and the expectations of Business. We argue this dilemma is particularly acute for critical scholars and will use this example in the next part of the paper.

2.2.1. Critical Management Education as an archetype of the performativity dilemma

Many have written about the dilemmas faced by critical management educators. Huault and Perret (2011) offered a discussion of the "unresolved dilemma" facing the CME. The latter can either be "radical" and lead educators to impose their own view for not necessarily positive effects among students, or be "pragmatic" and may lead to assimilation and appropriation; hence the dilemma. A similar argument is offered by Reynolds (1999, p. 182) who notes "There is a residual dilemma for teachers committed to a critical pedagogy. It arises from the inevitable tension between its democratic principles and the authority conventionally vested in the educator's role."

It should be noted mainstream management scholars are also faced with similar challenges: most of them consider themselves not only as *per-formateurs* in charge of reproducing a *status quo*, by developing and teaching "tools" and "practices", but also as scientists. Business Schools are inherently exposed to such a debate between being *culturally* dominant and *scientifically* dominant, as they are in a peculiar situation: they both are associated with a "profession" – management – and many sciences they draw from (Bourdieu, 1984); hence another form and source of the performativity dilemma.

Fenwick (2005, p. 45) adds to the discussion to point out the "ethical dilemmas of Critical Management Education" and, in line with much "critical management research" (Fournier & Grey, 2000), believes that "Educators committed to the challenges of CME presumably expect to continue pursuing reflexivity, and struggle in their efforts to de-naturalize apparent inevitabilities and to promote anti-performativity." These authors are not referring to performativity in the same sense as we are, since what they want to avoid is a simple subordination of knowledge to efficiency concerns. Fenwick (2005) offers an interesting reflection and identifies three main issues of CME: the balance between questioning of dominant discourses and learner's subjectivities (2005, pp. 37–39), the importance to not being too negative or ambitious when it comes to de-naturalizing or critiquing (2005, pp. 39–

41), and the difficult balance between action and theory (2005, pp. 41–44), are identified as potential challenges of the critical management educators.

Reynolds (1999, p. 174, our emphasis) notes a critical Management Education can be "expressed either in its *content* (curriculum), its *process* (structures, methods, relationships) or *both*"; he defines as "content-focused radicals" management educators who introduce critical ideas through the content aspect, and "strategy-based radicals" as the ones who opt for "educational designs and methods based on more participative values", that is the process aspect, and believes a critical approach to be one that "would involve [critical orientations in] both content and process". This last statement will be discussed in this paper, as we advance a truly critical approach to Management Education to not only be about using critical content and process, and to need to take into account another dimension we refer to as the "transparency of performativity", *i.e.* the amount of transparency in the performative process of Management Education and its agents. Reynolds (1999, p. 176) identifies two main "pitfalls" of a critical approach: a) resistance by managers or assimilation by management educators of principle ideas into existing belief systems, and b) negative consequences (mental, emotional or social) where a critical approach is adopted due to managers using a more questioning attitude towards their professional environment and activities. He first (1999, pp. 180–181) points at a "need for reflexivity" of the management educator – which notably translates into clarity in language, expressing precisely the aim of the critical process instead of a more general convenient critical discourse but without specific transparently communicated on objectives, achieving consistency between content and method, being aware of management educators' inconstancies between the content of their teaching and the structures and procedures of their institutions. Then, he points (Reynolds, 1999, pp. 180–181) at "questions of responsibility", *i.e.* management educators should "feel responsible for the effects of learning on students' state of mind", as "anxiety, loss of self-identity or marginalization" are possible negative and disruptive effects of "engaging in critical reflection" – which notably can translate into being a caring critical person, putting students in the position to make an informed choice as to whether or not engaging into critical reflection (Reynolds, 1999, pp. 181–182). These recommendations are close to those made by supporters of critical performativity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Spicer et al., 2009).

Before discussing our attempt at being critically performative in order to put critical performativity to work, we need to present our main case study and our data.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION PROCESS

3.1. CONTEXT

This paper is part of a broader, long-term still on-going research project. Its aim is to contribute to the Art & Management field (e.g. Meisiek & Barry, 2014; Taylor & Hansen, 2005) – sometimes referred to as Organizational Aesthetics, though we will use the former from now on to simplify reading – and to the (Critical) Management Education one (e.g. French & Grey, 1996).

This project is conducted with a "general" qualitative approach (Yin, 2011), quite inductive. It basically started in March 2013, although I was a Business School student prior to that. We use different methods such as an ethnographic posture (Kozinets, 2002; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) in our own academic environment – which is not challenge-free (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2014; e.g. Bourdieu, 1984) – combined with open-ended interviews[1] and case studies – with all its advantages and pitfalls (for a debate on the issues associated with case studies, see, for instance Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Eisenhardt, 1989, 1991). Our hope is such a mix will allow us to address some of the risks involved when using only one of these qualitative techniques (e.g. Alvesson, 2003); qualitative methods are recommended by the literature for those wanting to study art in management (e.g. Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007).

Although we of course build on the rest of the data we collected, we focus here on our biggest case study: a teambuilding and kickoff workshop that took place in a French top Management Education institution in September 2014; during four days, students were asked to create artworks in small groups of four to six people, under the direction of an artist – who is also an academic specialized in Organization Theory – whose role was central and who was assisted by myself[2]. Two other management scholars and another artist had more punctual roles, but were clearly identified as members of the Management Education team. The artworks were supposed to be about a particular management field, although we did widen the scope to management in general due to the different topics that spontaneously emerged during the workshop and which students were interested to work on. The four days were concluded by a

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[1] Throughout the entire project, we interviewed thirteen different management educators interested in (and sometimes already) using art in their academic activities; some were interviewed twice, and we also conducted many often shorter informal interviews in non expected situations (such as colloquiums). Therefore, those last informal ones having not been recorded. These interviews are of different types as they are conducted in the general approach.

[2] I mainly was there to collect data, but I did provide assistance in animating the sessions, in terms of "managerial content". I tried to leave the artistic expertise to the artist who himself tried to leave the organizational expertise to me, though we both admitted some overlapping when we talked about it.

"private viewing" during which artworks were exposed in a particularly beautiful room, often used for events such as kickoff seminars, of the Management Education institution, and to which other academics, staff members and other students from the institution, and art specialists, were invited to, and came to.

The educational team members mostly knew each other – being either part of the same institution for some, or having participated in common projects and colloquiums (largely related to Art & Management) in the past. The objectives of the seminar were not necessarily, ironically, clearly stated, but there were two "obvious" ones. First, it was of course a kickoff seminar aiming at integrating students; our data indicates with very little possible doubt that this part was a brilliant success. We wanted to provide them with an original experiment, using our expertise in terms of art and/or Art & Management Education (e.g. Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). Second, and this appeared quite late in the process and as a secondary objective, we wanted to use the experiment to collect data, in order to consider producing research from it – the Master's programme second year that started with the workshop, integrates a "research track" and it somehow felt fun and smart to involve students in a research process. We all had pretty spontaneously – knowing each other – agreed on a "tacit" – and we will discuss largely how this word is in fact very important – and third objective, in terms of content: to produce artworks that would offer a critique of management concepts and with a sufficient quality so as to be able to present them to visitors, during the private viewing. The critique dimension was clearly stated as a goal for artworks, but we need to admit the critical aspect was mostly implicit and not a stated objective in itself. Finally, it should be noted the artist-management specialist and I are both specialized in critical thinking, in all its polysemy (e.g. Adler et al., 2007; Alvesson et al., 2011).

3.2. METHODOLOGY

During the experiment, I mostly went from groups to groups – animating in parallel and providing assistance, therefore being active although part of no group – and conducted "on the field live interviews" using a voice recorder; our objective to use these for research was clearly stated and students knew I was there as a PhD student to collect data which could also be used by the team as resources for other research projects. All students agreed to this process and signed a document to that effect.

The recordings represented close to 8 hours of live interviews; they were transcribed. We also took 326 pictures and filmed approximately 30 minutes with our digital cameras (with sound); both served as material. We did not use a systematic "coding" process, as this did not bring

anything to our analysis at this point and rather searched for critical incidents or moments. Many students provided very useful open comments during the experiment, and we had the opportunity to exchange ethnographically with them during four days. Finally, we recently interviewed some of them again in groups, but these interviews have not been transcribed yet; they still contributed to our general analysis.

Some verbatims are re-creations. They synthesize different comments, reactions or beliefs expressed during the ethnography but which, for practical reasons (such as not having recorded the whole time), were not recorded. We can now turn to our results and discussion.

4. THE NEED FOR PERFORMATIVES AND FOR A CRITICAL POSTURE IN ORDER TO CRITICALLY PUT CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY TO WORK

We have showed Management Education was supposed to be *hyper-performative*, through its agents' performatives. In fact, there is a *"double performativity"* expected from Management Education: a) to shape students in a certain way and b) by extension, to influence their future actions and therefore entail managerial practices. For one who wants to offer an alternative "critical performativity" in this environment, art seems like a perfect candidate.

We wish to explain why we believe fully putting critical performativity to work in Management Education requires a) being (critically) performative, which we failed to be because three "requirements" were not seriously met, and b) being critical in critical terms (notably CME terms) when putting critical performativity to work. In the discussion, we will show putting critical performativity to work in Management Education is before all about taking a critical stance towards the performativity dilemma. But first, we need to explain why art appeared to inherently be a source of critical performativity and in fact satisfies most conditions of critical performativity.

4.1. ART SEEMS USEFUL FOR CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

CME asks for critical processes and contents (Reynolds, 1999). Art appears to naturally be an original *form* (process) that may answer the need for critical processes freed from intellectualism and opaque research language (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 1992).

To some, it appears as if art was naturally critical in terms of process – as it is different from the "traditional" lecture and supposedly helps redistribute power between educators and students, as they are the ones producing their artworks – and content – as it is not based on words –, therefore making it a perfect candidate for a critical pedagogy and *a fortiori*, since as

we have seen it is only one of the many possible forms of discourse (Bourdieu, 2001; Phillips et al., 2004), for a critical performativity within Management Education.

Art is often considered, as our data indicates, in order to offer a "different" performativity.

4.2. ART AND THE CONDITIONS OF CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY

Many conditions of critical performativity have already been offered. Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) have identified five elements, which although not exhaustive seem important, of "critical performativity": becoming affirmative, caring, pragmatic, potential focused and normative. We should detail each of them and discuss whether or not our artistic experiment in Management Education fits them.

Becoming affirmative means "not stand[ing] outside or attempt to deny an object of analysis" and, for instance, trying to create ambivalent metaphors found in organizations, instead of not moderate positions, in order to assume an open minded position (2009, pp. 545–547). During our experiment, we constantly challenged our students so they do not stop at a "preconceived vision", so they "say something" about an organizational phenomenon they were critical about. We asked them to create ambivalent metaphors of organizational phenomena through artworks, not simple straightforward ones simply stating the obvious.

Care is about "providing space for respondents' views but also seeking to challenge them", and requires "working with mysteries" and "being open to the unexpected insights that come from our engagement in a research site"; the objective is, unlike most CMS research, to not rely on an oppositional stance but to choose a challenging one, and to admit being challenged as well (as a scholar notably) (2009, p. 546 and 547–549). Our data indicates we were successful in debating about artworks and their content with students, although some felt our powerful positions – as the ones grading them notably – had led us to "impose our visions".

Pragmatism is about "working with particular aspects of an organization", notably through "applied communicative action" which means "creating a space where participants with an interest may be involved in debate and dialogue" (2009, p. 546 and 549–550). The artworks we produced were generally about generating discussion and emerged after fruitful debate between management educators and students. The private viewing allowed many students to express a point of view they might not have been legitimate to advance otherwise.

Potentialities is about "creat[ing] a sense of what could be by engaging latent possibilities in an organization", for instance through the "exploration of heterotopias"; it is about trying to go beyond critique and expressing alternatives (2009, p. 546 and 550–552). The many artworks produced were more about "denouncing" than "offering" alternatives, probably

because the "plastic" and "static" artworks that students chose to realize were not the most convenient way to express an alternative. We also noted all artworks were quite "negative", such as about "generalized fraud" or believed limitations of change management.

Being normative is a "systematic assertion of criteria used to judge good forms of organization" and implies, for instance, "engaging with micro-emancipations" (2009, p. 546 and 552–554). We tried to offer many possible alternative normative positions, but most artworks and reasoning conducted during the experiment were "really critical" about macro-problems, such as generalized fraud. Therefore, although we believe it is important for students to be offered numerous normative possible positions, we forgot to focus on issues they are directly able to influence.

Analyzing critically our experience, we noted it satisfied at least partially most conditions. We still noticed many "critical pitfalls", *i.e.* critical elements which can be critiqued in critical terms, which would need to be addressed for critical performativity to be critical.

One of the biggest issue with regards to "critical performativity" was indicated by the fact most students did not express, including months later, they had developed critical thinking capabilities, although many mentioned it had helped them "reflect" or "think" about management issues etc. Therefore, critical performativity did not occur, or at best occurred partially – such as for a few students or with a limited impact. A failure to use successful (critical) performatives and a "non critical" posture in CME terms can explain this.

4.3. ON WHY CRITICAL PERFORMATIVITY WAS NOT FULLY PUT TO WORK

Before concluding, we want to indicate why we were not successful in fully putting critical performativity to work.

4.3.1. Not using successful (critical) performatives at the individual level

As reminded earlier, institutional performativity requires successful performatives at the individual (agent) level. Three conditions that are particularly important for a performative to be successful were not met in our experiment: a) the "speaker" wants to be performative (in a precise way), b) the performative process is transparent so as to be identified and c) the environment is able to understand it (notably through the sharing of mutual codes and social references).

First, it seems successful performatives require an intention from the speaker. Even though most performatives are not "explicit" according to Austin (1975), it appears – especially when the desired effect does not necessarily obtain a full spontaneous agreement, such as with critical thinking in Management Education – some motivation and desire to be performative is

16

required at the individual level. Yet, we explained when describing our experiment how we had not clearly specified we wanted to be critically performative; therefore, the "meaning" of the performative was not clear and even our desire to be critically performative was not evident among us. Our main individual objectives probably diverged. The reason may be we had different stances towards the performativity dilemma.

Second, we believe one of our main mistakes was to not openly take a (critical) stance with respect to the performativity dilemma. We did not publicly acknowledge the workshop as being "about" *shaping* critical individuals; in fact, it was not really, since we had not discussed enough our own intent. Therefore, students perceived it above all as a "fun" kickoff experiment primarily about producing nice artworks and creating a team spirit between them, while it was surely supposed to be much more than that – although the "fun" kickoff was largely acknowledged. For (critical) performatives to be successful, it appears one needs to be transparent about its performative intent so as for it to be identified and be able to "work".

Finally, successful performatives require a mutual understanding and sharing of "codes" , or at least knowledge of their existence (Austin, 1975; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1979, 2001). Here, our experiment encountered two challenges: critical codes are not necessarily always known by students and the artistic form may be equivocal (e.g. Bourdieu, 1979, 2001). First, while traditional (mainstream) performatives may be understood when they are "opaque" and not fully "explicit" – as mainstream "codes" are by mainstream definition shared between almost all individuals (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1979, 1989) –, critical performatives may require transparency and explanation in order to be mutually understandable – since "critical codes" are usually, by definition, not mastered by part of the individuals involved in the situation. For critical performativity to occur, it seems one has to openly express he or she wants to be critically performative. Second, not everyone masters or understands art in the same way (Bourdieu, 1979), which makes this form not the best one to offer easy to understand performatives. Some already noted this challenge with using art in Management Education (Sliwa, Sørensen, & Cairns, 2013).

Somehow, we were not successful in being performative, and therefore *per-formateurs*. Maybe with students who were the most "acquainted" with critical thinking, or "open" to it, the partially critical performatives we mobilized may have succeeded at least partially and "not explicitly" because it was identified and transparent enough to work, but not for others. Therefore, critical performativity could not occur, at least not globally, as critical performatives were not globally successful. Beyond this first pitfall, we believe we were not

critical, in critical terms, in animating this workshop. We want to argue critical performativity can only be put to work, in Management Education, through a truly critical pedagogy critically mobilized.

4.3.2. Not having been critical in critical terms when trying to be critically performative

According to the CME literature we reviewed, a critical pedagogy requires both a critical process and a critical content, but introducing critical elements in the management classroom tends to generate problems (mental, emotional or social) among students (Reynolds, 1999). Management educators are affected as well and face many dilemmas (e.g. Fenwick, 2005; Hagen et al., 2003; Huault & Perret, 2011), which we argue eventually all are part of the performativity dilemma of Management Education. More generally, CME asks for a more equalitarian situation in Management Education, for a more equally shared power between educators and students, and in some way for non unpleasant experiences in the management classroom (e.g. French & Grey, 1996; Sliwa et al., 2013). Critical performativity was not fully put to work, in our experiment, because we used unsuccessful (critical) performatives at the individual level – notably because of the artistic medium –, therefore not entailing (critical) performativity at an institutional level. We also wish to suggest critical performativity by definition requires, when one wants to put it to work in Management Education, a) both a critical process and a critical content – as this is a definition of critical pedagogy –, b) a focus on the content and not (only) the process – otherwise, the focus is taken away from the development of critical capabilities which probably is by definition the aim of a critical training programme –, and c) an implementation which fits critical expectations such as not "imposing" an unpleasant experiment to students.

Otherwise, a "non critical performativity" is the best one can hope for. We explain that, in our artistic experiment, we used a *"critical taylorism"* and relied on the hope for an *"insidious (critical) performativity"*.

We define *critical taylorism* as a mainstreamized critical process generated by a focus on productivity when producing critical elements or using critical processes – in our case, artworks –; it could lead to a "non critical performativity", since it demonstrates what mainstream management methods can accomplish. Our data largely indicates we put our students under much pressure, because of "time constraints" we kept reminding all the time, of the high level of personal engagement required by the process, and of the ironic lack of transparency (or decision) with regards to our critical performative stance. Too focused on "producing" (critical) interesting artworks – as many students and ourselves express very

often in the recordings –, both the students and us tended to simply apply a process to a particular issue considered critically but with traditional productivity-focused management methods, instead of developing critical thinking skills; probably largely because we *had to* produce in time for the private viewing – somehow, the art production and the art itself took over as more important in everybody's mind. Some students noted how we sometimes indirectly "imposed" our views (artistically notably) and how they simply applied them because they did not feel legitimate to contest them, or because there was a lack of production time. This translated into some students complaining about the time amplitude of the workshop, or "redoing" some actions many times – such as repainting or producing dozens of similar objects for their artworks, in a somehow "taylorist" way. This could be "non critical performativity" as the critical *intent* (content) was completely forgotten by many, and since the *process* was not so critical and the production (methods and results) considered a success, therefore legitimizing most of what was being critiqued, such as abusive power positions.

It is reasonable to argue we need more than *one* artistic, or critical, module to impact people sufficiently for them to become critically compatible. Yet, efficiently using existing experiments seems like a good idea. As Fenwick (2005, p. 38) points out, the benefits of *single one time experience of one unit* of critical processes and thinking tend to disappear as soon as they are mixed with other dominant mainstream perspective experiences. Because we used somehow "mainstream" management methods when animating the workshop, we failed to put critical performativity to work in a critical way. We a) did not use both a critical content and process, as we used a mainstream process, b) focused too much on the process that led students (and sometimes ourselves) to forget about the critical intent (content), and c) clearly did not satisfy requirements of CME, such as equally shared power between educators and students, or as we have shown before, using a process that does not creates differences among students (as art may tend to do (Bourdieu, 1979)).

In fact, many students were convinced by our experiment and expressed their satisfaction about it, including months later. But very few declared it helped them develop critical thinking; there was no widespread critical performativity. Moreover, students were kind of asked to deliver a critical speech themselves. Some sort of *"delegated performativity"*, *i.e.* a performative process where the "speaker" manages to have someone else "utter" the performatives in his or her place; it can lead to the original speaker not being identified as the real source of the performative process, and can probably help him or her "deal" with his or her performative dilemma since he or she is not the one directly speaking anymore and can

19

somehow "hide" behind the secondary "speaker". In our experiment, some said our artworks expressed our own ideas; yet, they were presented as "the students' artworks". This arguably is questionable in critical terms. In a way, students *had to* deliver a critical speech. Even if most of them seemed to agree with what they were saying, it is not impossible group effects or management educators' power positions led to some not expressing their disagreement. But this is a general pitfall with critical approaches in Management Education and not necessarily specific to cases where art is the medium.

In fact, we probably relied on a hope for an *"insidious (critical) performativity"*, *i.e.* a (critical) performative process not openly acknowledged or pointed at, and/or that produces effects not directly chosen. Most students – and maybe sometimes ourselves – simply missed or forgot the critical intent and content.

We therefore believe putting critical performativity to work in Management Education requires management educators to take an open and transparent critical stance with regards to the performativity dilemma, and then to critically, in CME terms notably, put critical performativity to work. This is coherent with what we argued with regards to successfully using critical performatives. Therefore, we did not fully critically put critical performativity to work; arguably, critical performativity by definition needs to be put to work in a critical fashion. Otherwise, only a non critical performativity can at best occur, which somehow is simply a different objective on which management educators simply need to decide.

5. CONCLUSION

Consequently, while some advance a critical pedagogy requires both a critical process and a critical content (Reynolds, 1999), we believe we used non so critical methods (process) in this experiment. It partly explains why critical performativity was, at best, not fully put to work. We studied a few elements – *e.g.* using what we refer to as "critical taylorism" and "delegated performativity" – which complemented our analysis of this failure to be critically performative. We showed before why we were not successful, at least not with everyone, when we tried to be (critically) performative, and therefore why critical performativity was at best not fully put to work. Going further, we advance one who wants to truly put critical performativity to work in Management Education, because of the definition of critical performativity and according to CME debates, must do it critically, *i.e.* must use a truly critical pedagogy which implies being critical in the process and in the content (Reynolds, 1999) and rely on a "transparent (critical) performative process". Using mainstream

"production" (process) methods, even with a critical intent (content), is not being critical in CME terms. This has a more general application and might indicate a critical performativity requires to be put to work through critical means, as having a critical impact is therefore not sufficient.

We did not fully put critical performativity to work because a) our (critical) performative process was not in accordance with conditions of success of performatives, and b) we were not really critical when putting critical performativity to work. Ironically, non critical performativity might have occurred as we were very successful in demonstrating the efficiency of mainstream management methods. This indicates our artistic experiment, although not critical, was an interesting experiment as our students learned something.

We admit this paper has many limitations. It is based on a single experience, but this is logical with such an inductive process. We also need to admit collecting our data the way we did might have led to not having all points of views equally expressed and analyzed. Our critical performative process may have been more successful than what we indicate. Yet, we believe those who were interviewed the most were largely those willing to be interviewed and those who appreciated the workshop the most, as some data indicates. But it is possible others, because they were critical of our critical process, in fact were more sensitive to critical ideas.

To conclude, we offer two practical implications – besides being open and transparent in the critical performative process, and critically putting critical performativity to work – that can help management educators who want to use art to put critical performativity to work in this context. First, it seems not organizing a private viewing or any exhibition, although this creates a space for expression, might limit the tendency to mobilize critical taylorism – there is less "in play", notably for the artist whose legitimacy was at stake since there was a public that included other artists, and for management educators whose programme reputation can be impacted. Another possibility which our ethnography indicates to be very important with any innovation in Management Education, may be to simply critically debrief what happened, including how we were not being fully critical when trying to put critical performativity to work. Something we obviously started to do by interviewing students but that may require more interactions, or a more institutionalized process.

We hope this paper offers new ideas in order to help put critical performativity to work in Management Education. Art is a possible solution, although there are many conditions for such experiments to critically put critical performativity to work in Management Education.

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