

**Organizational crowds
= Tribalism, violence and indifference =**

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In literature about organizations, the audience most frequently addressed is management. Authors help managers by offering them frames for how to see the phenomenon 'organization'. For instance, organizations are frequently presented in metaphorical terms (just google "organizational metaphor" and you will find 2,910,000 hits; feel free to check them out yourself) or as configurations (13.200 hits for "organizational configuration"). And after the frameworks are presented, there is usually another 'how to' that follows (not necessarily from the hand of the same authors): the 'how to deal with the interpreted organization of choice and start managing it as if it were real'. And so all sorts of theories – contingency theory, taylorism, systems theory, the learning organization, Humans Resource Management / Development, just to name a few – are offered to help managers *deal* with the organization. This makes the choice for management as the audience for books about 'organization' both obvious and odd. Obvious, because managers are at least literally the people who manage. Odd, because it separates managers from their organizations, so it is problematic just what it is they manage. None of the literature I know about presents organizations as 'just a bunch of people', including managers, workers and the like. The reason why organizations are not considered 'just a bunch of people', is because they are attributed a purpose, which makes this bunch of people purposeful, not arbitrary. They are gathered around a common goal, which is not individual, but organizational. But is this still the case? If anything, recent management behavior shows the opposite of a joint purpose (just google "management scandal" and you will be served with 13,000,000 hits). Fournier and Munro (2004) describe two seemingly contradictory themes: on the one hand the spreading of management principles and practices ('managerialism') and on the other hand, under the rubric of empowerment and autonomy, the ever-increasing withdrawal of managers from the scene of action. To use Castells' (1997) analytical frame: managers leave the space of places to enter the space of flows. Their management becomes a virtual reality. For them the organization they manage has become arbitrary. But that is not all. The workforce has experienced a shift from lifelong employment to lifelong employability. Along with this shift, managerial responsibility for the workforce moved to self management of the individual worker. And so, for the workers the organization they work for has become arbitrary as well. If the organization is arbitrary for managers and workers both, then it is odd to still speak of 'purposefulness' as the discriminator between an organization and 'just a bunch of people'. In this article I will consider organizations as the latter. What can be said about 'the naked organization', the organization we see when we take away the purpose and paraphernalia such as logos, buildings and technologies?

Tribal hordes

Maffesoli (1996) claims that mass culture has disintegrated and that social existence is conducted through fragmented tribal groupings, with a collective feeling of *puissance*. *Puissance*, as the inherent energy and vital force of the people, is opposite to *pouvoir*, the power of institutions. Agreeing with Baudrillard – to whom I will turn later – Maffesoli does not see the twentieth century masses in terms of the proletariat or other classes, but as the people without a logic of identity or a precise goal (in fact, both agree that sociology is unable to define the masses anymore, because the traditional categories for describing them have become obsolete). These masses are not subject to any historical movement and the tribes that crystallize from them are unstable, “since the persons of which these tribes are constituted are free to move from one to the other” (1996: 6). Maffesoli is interested in the untidy aspect of sociality and his goal is “to show, to describe and to analyze the social configurations that seem to go beyond individualism, in other words, the undefined mass, the faceless crowd and the tribalism consisting of a patchwork of small local entities” (1996: 9). He coins this most recent period the emphatic period, marked by the lack of differentiation and the loss in a collective subject. This resonates with Sloterdijks proposition that all love stories are stories about form and that every feeling of solidarity implies the formation of spheres, that is: the creation of an inner space or bubble in which there are compelling reasons for being together. For Maffesoli the being-together is a basic given as well. Indeed, the attraction is not so much in its exclusivity as it is in its exclusiveness: “the characteristic of the tribe is that by highlighting what is close (persons and places), it has a tendency to be closed in itself” (Maffesoli 1996: 141). Sloterdijk labels this a form-greenhouse: the inner circumstances of the people who live together enjoy an unconditional priority over so-called external relations.

The aesthetic

In this age of neo-tribalism emotional communities make up the aesthetic of the ‘we’, a mixture of indifference or disdain for any projectivist attitude and periodic bursts of energy and intensity in whatever action these communities undertake: “The community is characterized less by a project (*pro-jectum*) oriented towards the future than by the execution *in actu* of the ‘being-together’” (1996: 16). In fact, “justice itself is subordinate to the experience of closeness [and] abstract and eternal justice is relativized by the feeling (whether hate or love) experienced in a given territory” (1996: 17). Territory is important – the mass is a genius of place – and linked with ethic, “not an indifferent *a priori* theorizing but one which on a daily basis serves as a vessel for the collectivity’s emotions and feelings. In this manner, with varying degrees of success and in a given territory, we all adjust to one another and to the natural environment” (1996: 20). The age of seeing (*theorein*: to see) in which distance prevailed, writes Maffesoli, is transformed into a ‘tactile’ period in which proximity predominates. This transition leaves an opening for the emergence of a vital instinct; the masses have the ability to resist and outlast political change, to regenerate themselves. This is what Maffesoli means with *puissance*. What results from the decline of great institutional and activist structures are the basic communities built on what he calls a *proxemic* reality whose finished form is nature. This proxemic reality relates to Sloterdijks definition of the intimate, which can only exist in shared, consubjective and interintelligent inner spaces in which bipolar or multipolar groups participate, in autogenous reservoirs that people create by huddling together, incorporating, invading, entwining, joining and resonating. The homo sapiens aestheticus, Sloterdijk writes, couples charm with selection benefits. This is the facial genesis, the start of the protraction process in which humans interidentify their faces as human. People recognize themselves in the face of others and become to each other the air that they breathe. They create spheres in which they covibrate and the buzzing conversations about themselves is the primary climate-creating function of society. This is what Maffesoli

defines as vitalism or puissance.

Puissance

Sloterdijks *perichoresis* (from the ancient Greek 'dancing around' or 'to be swung around in a circle') implies the impossibility to locate people in an outward, physical space; instead, people themselves create the spot they are in by their relationships. Contrary to ex-tension which, according to Maffesoli, creates vast and impersonal structures, in-tension creates social density, which helps puissance reach another space-time: "over time, and because of the inevitably increased rigidity of institutions, we see an increasing separation which may lead to divorce. When this happens, this 'density' will be exiled to another space-time while waiting for new forms in which to express itself" (1996: 36). Maffesoli identifies several anthropological and psychological roots of these 'black holes' of sociality, such as grottoes, niches and shelters, as well as the maternal breast and uterus (also richly described in Sloterdijk). Following, among others, Dorflès and the Surrealists, Maffesoli writes that "any construction requires an interior space on which to rest" and that there is a "necessity of an *underground centrality*" that serves as "places of freedom" (1996: 37). Dorflès writes that in the past, contact of man with signs was rare (there were only a few books, frescoes were only found in churches and the streets were empty with publicity signs); in recent times, however, the frequency of this contact has risen to a level that we have lost the interval between images (*l'intervalle perdu*) and therefore have lost the sense of silence, the taste of things and the necessary distance that gives relief to our lives. The loss of the interval results in monotony and in a way to death by "too much" (*la mort par "trop plein"*). Aware of a *horror pleni* we feel the need for a pause in the stream of images. We sense the desire for lost space. In Sloterdijks terms: we create spheres as morpho-immunologic structures. And once these become institutionalized (intoxicated), the free spirit will look for alternative spaces to breathe.

Secrets

This lost space is surrounded by secrecy: "there is always, to borrow an expression from Simmel, 'a secret behavior of the group hidden from the outside'. It is this behavior which, following the more or less established eras, is the basis of social perdurability and which, apart from occasional declines, guarantees the continued existence of the phylum. If it should be necessary to clarify further, I am talking about an ideal type which does not exist in pure form, which is rarely presented as such by the protagonists themselves, naturally enough; however, it is certainly this 'secrecy' which allows us to measure the vitality of a social group" (1996: 37). The essence of secrecy is self-preservation (Sloterdijk uses the image of the arc – from the Latin *arca* = closed/secret – to illustrate the project of selfharbour and selfsurrounding of a group against an outside that has become impossible to live in); the group needs the neglected margins and sidelines to develop into a larger whole: "the secret society [...] is secular, decentralized, without the baggage of dogmatic and intangible doctrines. It is on this basis that the resistance resulting from the people's aloofness can continue, invariably, across the centuries" (1996: 92). This aloofness in the eye of the political intellectual is in fact the vitalism or puissance of the life without qualities: "the crowd is hollow, vacuity itself, and it is in this that *puissance* resides. [...] It is only in its hodge-podge, its effervescence, its disordered and stochastic aspects, its touching naivety, that the vitalism of the people is of interest to us. It is because it is in this *nothingness* which gives shape to everything that, relatively speaking, we can see an alternative to decline; but at the same time it tolls a bell for modernity" (1996: 38).

Underground strategies

The productive power of the masses lies in their puissance, which energizes them to begin grand eras or flourishing cities; only later there is confiscation by a few self-appointed

managers, owners and clerks of legitimacy and knowledge. But masses cannot be domesticated and resist domination because of pluralism and the 'perverse' (*per via* = detour) procedure of simulated acquiescence: "To restate a situationist expression, rather than 'fighting alienation with alienated methods' (bureaucracy, political parties, militancy, deferment of pleasure), one uses derision, irony, laughter – all underground strategies which undermine the process of normalization and domestication which are the goals of the guarantors of the external and hence abstract order" (1996: 50). Political intellectuals who measure with the yardstick of the 'project' will find the ambiguity and monstrosity of the masses always proof of their incapability of being something else; but masses, claims Maffesoli, are self-sufficient; they are not finalized, have no goals or projects, and so they do not even need political intellectuals. In fact, their "sole *raison d'être* is a preoccupation with the collective present" (1996: 75). In the combination of proxemics, pluralism, nature, the collective, the present and the tactile, Maffesoli labels the wandering tribes of today as aesthetic: a way of feeling in common and of recognizing ourselves. This 'being-together' is based on a vital spontaneity and an anarchist logic.

The mediator

Being-together in constituted micro-groups in networks is, according to Maffesoli, the most final expression of the creativity of the masses. The pluralism in this system of differentiated alliances is balanced by a mediator. This is, says Maffesoli, the outsider: a person or a group "which acts as a counterweight, which plays the role of intermediary, which simply makes up the numbers, thus strengthening the balance of a given whole" (1996: 142). He links this role with the function of proxemics in ancient cities, who functions as a link between the various ethnic and national groups that made up these cities. The 'proxenus' (close) is the one who brings closer; this allows the stranger or outsider to take an active part in the city, while remaining foreign: "Thus, the recognition of diversity and the ritualization of the discomfort that it occasions leads to a specific adjustment which in a way uses the trouble and the tension as useful balancing factors for the city" (1996: 142).

But what happens if the stranger, proxenus, foreigner or outsider is unable to keep the balance? What happens if the trouble and tension are not adjusted? The equilibrium can prove very fragile, as I will show in the next section.

Violent mobs

The magic of the face is the sharing of joy, but the identification of strangeness is also the origin of terror. In case of endogenous disproportion, the bubble can either extend and assimilate the strangeness (a form of pacification), or it can burst. But there is a third option Sloterdijk mentions: the bubble can shrink by eliminating the cause of the disproportion. In 1989 Girard presented his scapegoat theory based on four stereotypical elements. I will discuss these in the following paragraphs.

Indiscretion

First, there is a period of social turmoil in which differences are disintegrated. This situation is disastrous, because people lose their social orientation points and become unable to navigate themselves through their lives. Normal institutions collapse in a time of crisis and there is a sense of "extreme loss of social order evidenced by the disappearance of the rules and 'differences' that define cultural divisions. [...] Institutional collapse obliterates or telescopes hierarchical and functional differences, so that everything has the same monotonous and monstrous aspect" (Girard 1989: 12-13). In such a cultural eclipse social and moral causes are sought. Sloterdijk connects the lack of indiscretion (between subject and object, between object and sign) and the corresponding threat to the reality of the

symbolic superinstitution to the lack of genetic difference when siblings, mothers and sons or fathers and daughters mate. Both indiscretions herald the end of society: when everybody is the other and nobody is himself, then a drab perichoresis arises which dashes the optimistic plans of every founding principle. Via the anarchistic – not necessarily incestuous – drive of many people the undoing of differentiation always lures. When the disproportion grows out of proportion, however, the bubble is in danger and order must be restored.

Vicious crimes

Second, therefore, there is the revelation of a vicious crime that transgresses borders. Girard mentions power-related crimes against people whom it is most criminal to attack (powerful kings and fathers, powerless children), sexual crimes (rape, incest, bestiality) or religious crimes (profanation). Agamben quotes among others the *terminum exarare* (eliminating borders) and *verberatio parentis* (violence of a son against his parents); both are examples of the crimes Girard finds stereotypical for scapegoating and both are, according to Agamben, crimes that do not violate a judicial norm and so do not call for a regular punishment. Sloterdijk evokes the specifically expressive punishment for the extraordinary crime of high treason, in which the traitor's attack on the heart of the political system is answered with a counterattack on the traitor's heart. The expulsion from the circle of the living and saved is a recurrent procedure in all executions and excommunications, but Sloterdijk finds cutting out the living heart of the traitor an exceptionally hysteric way of putting someone to death and to express that 'death' and 'outside' are one and the same. He furthermore does not explicitly label atheism a crime, but he does point out that atheism effectuates a loss of spirituality, which makes the difference between dead and vital bodies meaningless. Between the citizens of the polis indifference of all to all rules, because lacking a uniting principle these citizens cannot tell themselves apart.

The people are indifferent, but by no means apathetic. The crime Girard puts forward is directly related to the disaster; it originates from a collective blindness for more obvious reasons (for instance natural causes) and therewith explains the crisis in terms of control. This collective blindness resonates with a taboo, a potential danger which becomes reality once its name, that fatal word, is mentioned. The crime is typically transgressive, precisely to serve as a simile for the taboo, which will remain unnamed (in fact, not using the proper name serves as verbal exorcism, that is: the refusal to name makes the dreaded word a linguistic scapegoat, an offer or sacrifice to a higher power). In this situation "public opinion is overexcited and ready to accept the most absurd rumors"; there is "appetite for persecution" and "a propitious climate for massacres" (Girard 1989: 6). The wrongdoers are blamed for either attacking the community directly in violating its cultural and social foundations or for starting the disintegration process in their own sphere. Rather than blaming themselves, mobs blame either society in general or people who seem "particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons" (Girard 1989: 14).

Guilt and secret

Third, then, a guilty party is appointed. This is not just any party, it is a party capable of polarizing the crowds in an 'us versus them' (in terms of Maffesoli: the pronexus brings the tribes closer together). The parties most likely to be chosen seem to be ethnic and religious minorities, but there are also physical and mental criteria: "Sickness, madness, genetic deformities, accidental injuries, and even disabilities in general tend to polarize persecutors" (Girard 1989: 18). Also the poor and marginal outsiders as well as the rich and powerful marginal insiders risk the wrath of the mobs. The victims are held responsible for their individual acts that are considered harmful on a global level; the

accusation mediates between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the bubble and the globe. The stereotypical victims of mobs are however not accused because of their difference, but because they are not so different at all: "The signs that indicate a victim's selection result not from the difference within the system but from the difference outside the system, the potential for the system to differ from its own difference, in other words not to be different at all, to cease to exist as a system. [...] Difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system, its relativity, its fragility, and its mortality" (Girard 1989: 21). Maffesoli coins the foreign element a reminder of the polytheism of values: "This intrusion of the foreign element may function as an *anamnesis*: it reminds the social body that had a tendency to forget it, that it is structurally heterogeneous; even if for reasons of ease it tended to try to restore everything to unity" (1996: 108-109). Sloterdijk places this unity in the transition from bubble to globe, that is: from the intimate sphere to the political system. In the latter, the orderly and transparent science of geometry is the only science that provides useful interpretations and explanations for theology and political theory: understandability, roundness and optimality converge. In order for the centre (the All) to communicate with the individual points, an intimate communication is required to substitute the intimacy of the bubble. This intimate communication results in panoramic attention of the gods and only the malevolents will feel threatened by and want to escape from this hypertransparency. The disturbers of order are without exception arrested. But the inherent heterogeneity in unity reveals a stressed compulsion for order that rather frightens than founds, because people are commanded as if they were not free agents, but instruments, not rational beings who chose their own goals, but will-less officials serving a totalitarian god. So for the domination of the gods to work its charm, persuasive arguments must not contradict the sense of freedom. The idea of heteronomy is deflected and transformed into the idea of self-determination: the rational person is a voluntary co-worker of the gods and partner in the creation of the all-inclusive and inspired cosmic sphere. But this new sphere is not without its paradox: either the sphere is all-inclusive and also includes atheists (who claim that there is no godly inspiration), or it is not and in excluding atheists it proves their point. The consequences of this paradox are surprisingly enough not problematic: the atheist is put in jail and after his death his body will be thrown over the borders where it will not be buried. Sloterdijk concludes that the unproblematic ease with which this paradox and its consequences are displayed (not secret) demonstrates the immunization of the global sphere: as long as a polis cannot survive without the possibility of excommunicating its enemies, an all-inclusive globe cannot stay in shape if it cannot expel what it is unable to integrate.

In Agamben's analysis, the *homo sacer* or bare life is privileged to form the foundation of the polis by way of his expulsion. The *homo sacer* is the life that can be killed but not sacrificed. Agamben claims that sovereignty is not a positive power, but a negative one. It is the power to exclude oneself, to create something new out of the exception by formulating new norms and thus a new normality. It is the paradoxical power to identify yourself as 'not outside' and thereby identifying yourself as an exception, as 'outside'. Rule and exception remain related: "It is not the exception that gets subtracted from the rule, but the rule that, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and only in this way can constitute itself as rule, by constantly maintaining a relation to it" (Agamben 2002 – see note in reference list). The sovereign decision to exclude is the original judicial-political structure in which who is included and who is excluded gains significance. But in doing so, the sovereign power itself is also unidentifiable. It is similar to the Fibonacci numbers, in which the next number is defined by adding up the two previous numbers: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13. The numbers obey a simple rule, but in its origin, they start with an exception, that is: the relation between 0 and 1. It is not considered problematic that 1 comes out of 0, that

something arises out of nothingness (read: undefined, undetermined, without qualities nor quantity). In terms of the sovereign: the potential (with its positive and negative power, that is: to ... and to not ...) is the form in which being founds itself sovereignly, without anything preceding and defining it, except its own power not to be. It is the reality that realizes itself by giving up its power not to Following Badiou's remarks that the state is not based on a social contract, of which it is thought to be the expression, but on its decomposition (*déliation*) which it forbids, Agamben states that decomposition is the dissolving of an *a priori* relationship, but this relationship has in its original shape an exclusive character. The homo sacer is the original figure of the life that is banned and in this he is the reminder of the original exclusion from which the political dimension could arise out of nothing. Maffesoli explains how a group declares itself, delineates its territory and therewith confirms its existence; he sees "this nothingness" at the foundation of tribes from the positive side, since from nothingness everything can emerge; however, Girard and Agamben are less optimistic and point out that there is a price to pay for revealing social origins. Exposing the foundations of society as 'nothing' resembles "revealing the truth of the system", and so fourth, in order to purge the community and safeguard its survival, there is collective murder. It is, as writes Sloterdijk, every social unity's fundamental duty to not only keep the dead in a protected nearby distance, but also to banish evil from its inside and secure its borders. That is why the inner spaces of cultures are affective arenas who tie their participants together by giving them a role in the most exciting, binding and attractive of all social projects: the violent expulsion of evil from their midsts. The sanctification of the inner space is closely related to the denunciation of the outside.

Collective dyslexia

In general, states Girard, the persecutors are honest about their violent deeds, because they are convinced that they are right and that their actions are justified. They believe in the guilt of the victim, of his unique power as a powerless individual to bring down a society, is a full system of representation. Girard speaks of the "unconscious" persecutors imprisoned in this system and in "their own illusions of victimage" (1989: 41): "The terror inspired in people by the eclipse of culture and the universal confusion of popular uprisings are the sign of a community that is literally undifferentiated, deprived of all that distinguishes one person from another in time and space. As a result all are equally disordered in the same space and the same time", Girard writes (1989: 16) and in a way, we might say that persecutor mobs suffer from a form of collective dyslexia. A dyslectic has the ability to complete fragmented pictures. He enters a stage of disorientation when he encounters an unknown object. This triggers his brains to change observations. Once the object is recognized, the disorientation fades. A dyslectic also has the ability to actually live his distorted observations. He experiences his mental representations as if they were real (Davis 2004). Given these characteristics of dyslexia as an individual phenomenon, it is interesting to see if they can be applied to mobs as well. Sloterdijk writes about autosuggestive conviction systems and cognitive autohypnoses. Girard speaks of "distorted presentation", of "illusions shared by a great number of people" (1989: 39) and of witch trials in which persecutors, witnesses and even witches themselves – despite the prospect of their horrific fate – all agree with the reality of magic: "the mind of a persecutor creates a certain type of illusion and the traces of his illusion confirm rather than invalidate the existence of a certain kind of event, the persecution itself in which the witch is put to death" (Girard 1989: 11).

Original sinners

According to Girard all myths about the founding of societies reflect at least two of these stereotypes and concludes that "All myths must have their roots in real acts of violence against real victims" (1989: 25). Often these myths evoke a situation in which it is neither

day or night, gods mingle with men, sun and moon are twins, etcetera. This lack of difference is the first stereotype. Then appears a criminal or prankster who must be punished. This is the second stereotype. The victim carries the marks of the victim, is for instance crippled, stricken with the plague, a foreigner or extremely beautiful. The physical and moral are inseparable and instead of baring some monstrous features, the victim is totally monstrous and therefore one with his crime. Agambens homo sacer is similar, as the homo sacer is defined by his close symbiosis with death, without actually belonging to the world of the dead nor of the living. He elaborates the figure of the werewolf, half man half wolf, but also the vampire fits this profile. Both are equally dead and un-dead, incorporations of the ultimate border (and its transgression). Agamben writes that the werewolf, a monstrous hybrid, is originally the figure of the one expelled from the community.

In the pacification of strangeness lies the paradox, writes Sloterdijk, that this process of inclusion creates new exclusiveness because the obstinate hordes that do not want to enter the civilized, lukewarm bath of the empire must be stigmatized as opponents. "Indeed, it is in protecting the stages of a revolution, the reasons for a conspiracy or more simply through passive resistance or 'aloofness' with regard to a particular (political, state, symbolic) power that a community is forged. Whether explosive or silent, there is a violence whose founding functions we have only begun to explore" (1996: 37-38), writes Maffesoli. Girard has in fact explored the founding functions of violence and concludes that all societies are violent in their origins, although they hide their aggression while they evolve. The victims of collective murder in myths are transformed into cult objects. They are worshiped since their death is the beginning of a revived or even new social or religious order: "There is only one person responsible for everything, one who is absolutely responsible, and he will be responsible for the cure because he is already responsible for the sickness" (Girard 1989: 43). Therefore the collective murder is both violent and liberating. In reversing the relationship between victim and mob it produces the sacred, making the first an active omnipotent and the latter a passive reception group. The once repelled scapegoat, responsible for social turmoil, is now an idol capable of reconciliation. The original murders in myths are usually eliminated or transformed into less violent representations (less brutal and individual instead of collective; the four stereotypes of the scapegoat are revised or softened), but nonetheless they are real. Violence, says Agamben, is the root of justice. The sovereign is the point where violence and justice are indistinguishable. The 'outside' (defined by identifying 'not outside') is actually 'inside'. There is a free and judiciously empty space inside the order. The sovereign power both includes the homo sacer and in the meantime excludes him from both profane and religious rights (he can be killed – without punishment – but not sacrificed). A relation (inclusion) will always remain, for it is impossible to communicate 'I'm not talking to you' without communicating. It is with violent communication that the homo sacer is excommunicated.

Girard concludes his analysis stating that "human culture is predisposed to the permanent concealment of its origins in collective violence. [But] once understood, the mechanisms can no longer operate; we believe less and less in the culpability of the victims they demand. Deprived of the food that sustains them, the institutions derived from these mechanisms collapse one after the other about us" (1989: 100-101). This revelation, he writes, is precisely what the Gospels perform: they defeat the persecutors' perception of their persecution – that violence can cast out violence and that scapegoats can save men – and expose "its total mistake, its perfect example of nontruth. [...] By revealing that mechanism and the surrounding mimeticism, the Gospels set in motion the only textual mechanism that can put an end to humanity's imprisonment in the system of mythological

representation based on the false transcendence of a victim who is made sacred because of the unanimous verdict of guilt" (1989: 115, 166).

The sovereign

The morpho-immunological spheres we build point to a sovereign on both the macro level (immunity as exemption, resisting internal influences) and the micro level (immunity as resisting external influences). The size of the globe is much bigger than that of the bubble. How can the sovereign as the central power stay in contact with his centrifugal points? Sloterdijk suggests that for the centre to remain attractive for even its most distant points, it must let other places share in the sweetness of power, in other words create shareholders to manage its signs in the periphery. The sovereign owns the monopoly on transmission. He propagates the signs autonomously. The message must come across uncorrupted and undistorted. The channels have to be clean and cannot be leaky or blocked. This demands authenticity and loyalty of the representatives: at any cost it must be prevented that the audience fails to recognize the words of the lord in the message they transmit. Therefore they must operate without egoism and sloth. A messenger who thinks of himself does not perform adequately. This is the eternal concern of the transmitting system. The representatives should never develop a self or an ego, or rather: their ego must be taken away from them even before they are appointed and be replaced with the subjectivity of the lord. Representatives become part of the sovereign power. Improper and selfish use of this power equal rebellion and treason, the cardinal political crimes.

Both Girard and Agamben point out similarities between the legislator / sovereign and the scapegoat / homo sacer and place them in a political dimension. "It is as if the power of the state", writes Girard, "nonexistent in this type of society, comes into temporary but nevertheless real rather than symbolic existence in these violent forms of unanimity" (Girard 1989: 177). For Agamben there is a structural, even symmetrical resemblance between the sovereign power and the homo sacer, in which the sovereign is the one to whom all people are potential *homines sacri*, and the homo sacer is the one to whom everyone behaves as a sovereign. Agamben adds that the killing of the homo sacer resembles the killing of the sovereign in that both killings fall outside the regular judicial system and both are not considered murders. And neither sovereign nor homo sacer can be sacrificed. This is a different perspective than that of Girard, who claims that the sovereign is a vulnerable power with the stereotypical marks of the victim: "The supreme legislator is the very essence of a scapegoat who had been made sacred" (Girard 1989: 178). This difference can be explained by looking at the social constellation. For Girard, the typical soil for scapegoating is lack of social difference. Agamben positions his homo sacer in a differentiated society. However, he also claims that differences are fading, as the exception becomes the rule and we all are potential *homines sacri*.

The type of the werewolf suggests that one can secretly change in and out of one's human form. The transformation of the werewolf corresponds with the situation of the exception, during which the city has crumbled and people enter an area in which they no longer differentiate themselves from animals. Again: the stereotype of lack of difference. Girard's mechanisms for the creation of scapegoats agrees with Agamben's conclusion that Hobbes' *homo hominis lupus* should be interpreted as the condition in which everybody is a homo sacer (werewolf) to everybody. Man becoming wolf and wolf becoming man is the always possible exception to the rule. This might mean that the third stereotype, that of the marks of the victim, should be revised; we are all potential victims to the exception. For Maffesoli this is not an immediate problem, but it risks becoming one: "being 'on the outside', as may be observed in the social networks, does not imply the end of the being-together, but quite simply that this being-together is invested in forms other than those

recognized by the instituted legality. The only serious problem is that of the threshold at which abstention, the fact of being 'on the outside', sets off the implosion of a given society" (1996: 96). It is modernity that revealed the emptiness of the sovereign signs and that marks the end of the transition of bubbles into globes.

The implosions of spheres, says Sloterdijk, result in foam. Foam is a collection of bubbles without the metaphysical sense of being-together. It is a spherical pathology with a triple focus. The political focus is that foam is naturally uncontrollable and tends towards a morphological anarchy. The cognitive focus is that groups and individuals living in foam are no longer able to see the world as a coherent and all-embracing whole. The psychological focus is that individuals in foam structures tend to lose their ability to create a physic inner space and to shrivel into isolated depressive points in a random 'around' (environment). *The globalization is in fact a universal war of one foam against the other. In differentiating different forms of peace the true world war begins: the battling out of the antithesis between power (root, control, apparatus, culture) and mind (uprooted, resistance, anarchy, art). If there were to be an end to history, Sloterdijk concludes, it would be the disappearance of these opposites.*

But battling out presupposes some form of interaction and communication. What would happen if one of the opposites remains passive and silent? In the next section I will focus on the lack of difference in masses and the impotence to involve them.

Indifferent masses

If the centre of the all-inclusive global sphere communicates with the individual points, no beam will be lost: instead, all beams depart from the centre to specific turning points, where they are reflected back to the centre. But if history has made one thing clear, it is that not all of the beams are sent back. There is a pale external wilderness beyond which no reflection or salvation can occur. It is precisely the presence of this wilderness that undermines the legitimacy of the centre: if the possibility of non-salvation exists, then what good is the saving centre for? If there is an area where the emanations of the radiating centre are so weakened that they do not cause any effect, then the radiating god, in spite of this attributed infiniteness, has a dark edge wherein his organizational powers cease to penetrate. God's weak spot is an ontological outer world that is his opposite and from which he cannot return to his own wholeness. This proves, writes Sloterdijk, that even the most creative attempts to make the world god-immanent are doomed to produce symptomatic weak spots. As soon as the world is considered as an enlarged, heavy and dense body, an indigestible residue, a tiny, annoying, obeying its own laws – or rather: obeying its own lawlessness – 'outside' puts itself in the foreground to question the immanence of all things in the light sphere. There is lost matter as there are lost souls.

Inertia and implosion

The unclear accumulation of the social, claims Baudrillard (1986), revolves around a sponge-like referent, an opaque and at the same time translucent reality, a nothing: the masses. In a literal sense they absorb all electricity of the social and political. They are not adequate conductors of the political or social nor of meaning in general. The appeal to the masses has in fact always remained without response. They are inertia. They are the power of inertia and of the neuter and *a priori* more powerful than any power that is wielded over them. In our traditional image of the masses, we see them oscillating between passivity and wild spontaneity; they always have a potent energy. But the masses do not have any latent energy that needs liberation. Our incapacity to accept and understand implosion is an obstacle for all our meaning systems, that resist with all their strength by concealing the collapse of meaning behind a festering of meanings and a

barrage of meaners. The social space is crossed with interstitial objects and crystal-like piles (Sloterdijks radiating god), that float around and encounter each other in a clair-obscure of thinking. The mass is a collection of individual particles of social rubbish and media impulses. An opaque nebula of which the increasing density absorbs all energies and rays of light in its environment to finally collapse under its own weight.

Meaninglessness

Only those who are liberated from their symbolic obligations form masses, because locked in infinite networks they are destroyed and condemned to function solely as the countless endpoints of the same models that fail to integrate them and end up producing them as statistical waste (the wasteland; Sloterdijks pale wilderness). The mass has neither quality nor reference; that is its definition of radical undefinability. There are no poles between which opposites interact; hence the impossibility to let meaning circulate. Baudrillard states firmly that the imperative of production of meaning, that is expressed in the constantly renewed imperative of moralizing information (to inform better, to socialize better, to elevate the cultural level of the masses) is bull shit. None of the efforts has effectuated a conversion to the seriousness of the content, not even to the seriousness of the code. And it is also nonsense, he writes, to claim that the masses are fooled. That the masses would spontaneously strive for the natural light of rationality has always been a hypocritical hypothesis that serves to secure the intellectual peace of the producers of meaning and to avert the opposite: masses have always rejected meaning and satisfied their lust for spectacle in full freedom. The denial of this freedom is robbing the silent masses of their indifference; even their apathy cannot be inherent but must be attributed. But not only are the masses passivist (in contrast to activist), they also choose openly, with a clear conscience and without even wondering why, a football match over a personal and political drama. Here a connection with Maffesoli is clear: "Laughter and irony are an explosion of life, even and especially if this life is exploited and dominated. Derision underlines that, even in the most difficult circumstances, one is able, together with or against those responsible, to reappropriate one's existence and, in relative terms, to enjoy it. This is a thoroughly tragic perspective, which is aimed less at changing the world than getting used to and tinkering with it. [...] while it is undeniable that there exists a 'political' society, an 'economic' society, there is an unqualified reality, and that is the social existence as such which I propose calling sociality and which may be 'the play-form of socialization'. In the framework of the aesthetic paradigm so dear to me, the play aspect is not bothered by finality, utility, practicality, or what we might call 'realities', but rather it is what stylizes existence and brings out its essential characteristic [...] the 'undirected being-together'" (Maffesoli 1996: 51, 81).

Polling

Baudrillard states that the silent majority of the masses as an imaginary referent does not mean that it is not there, but that it is impossible to represent it. The masses are no longer referents, because they do not want to belong to the order of representation. They do not speak out, they are polled. They do not think, they are researched. The referendum has replaced the political referent. Opinion polls, questionnaires, referendums and the media are the operating parts that no longer belong to a representative dimension, but to a simulative one. The significance of the silence is paradoxical: it is not a silence that does not speak, but a silence that forbids that it is spoken for. Nothing can represent the silent majority and that is its revenge. For centuries it seemed that power rested upon the passivity of the masses. This is what amazed Etienne de la Boétie when he wrote about voluntary slavery over four centuries ago. How is it possible, he wondered, that so many men and women, so many villages, so many cities, so many people tolerate a tyrant who has no other power over them than the power they give to him, who can only harm them

for as far as they let him, who could not hurt them the least unless they prefer to endure him instead of defeat him? The tyrant will be defeated when his country no longer agrees with its own slavery. If people stopped serving, they would be free. His answer to the puzzle is twofold: people get used to slavery and forget freedom, and they easily become weak cowards under the regime of a tyrant. Baudrillard offers no answer to his questions, but remarks that the inertia the power has stirred up now turns against it as a sign of its own death. That is why strategies are developed to reverse the process: from passivity to participation, from silence to speaking. But it is too late: the threshold of the critical mass, the involution from the social by inertia, is crossed. To prevent the mass to fall back into its silence and inertia, it ceases to fall under the regime of the will or the representation and falls under the guidance of diagnosis, the pure and simple prediction. Hence the universal predominance of information and statistics; the mass must be listened (in) to and sounded out in order to worm out some oracle. But instead of energizing the masses, information produces only more mass. The mass has cooled down and now absorbs all social energy without reflecting it. It absorbs all signs, meanings and messages without beaming them back: it consumes them. Baudrillard defines the masses as cemeteries for the dying social, whereas Maffesoli points out that they are characterized by a puissance or vitalism that enables them to resist and outlast politics and history and to recreate sociability.

Hyper

Masses do not make choices; they do not create difference, but indifference. And they have never been consciously politically or historically engaged, other than to leave everything in the lurch in full irresponsibility. These days, however, the dominant and submissive roles are turned. Everyday life and people in their banality are not the insignificant side of history. The retreat into the private domain could be a direct challenge addressed to politics, a form of active resistance against political manipulation. The platitude of normal life, all that was once thought bourgeois, despicable and a-political will now set the standard, while history and politics have to go seek a more modest stage elsewhere. Will they disappear? No, they will make a comeback, but in grotesque forms. Masses do not reinterpret messages using their own codes; they simply do not care about codes. They accept everything and transform it *en bloc* into the spectacular, without needing a different code, a meaning or fundamental resistance. The masses display hyperconformity. They let everything slide into an undefined sphere. This sphere is not even a sphere of nonsense, but of omnipresent fascination and manipulation. But our society is not ready to embrace its grieve over the loss of the real, of the power and inherently the loss of the social itself. We try to escape through an artificial revival of them. This is a doubling of the representation: power survives only to conceal that it has vanished. All is becoming simulacra and the process is irreversible.

Sloterdijk, in a more optimistic tone, disagrees with the irreversibility of the process. The ethics of living in foam, he writes, demands moving around in an immensely broad world with an unparalleled modest perspective. Within the decentralized small and middle-sized bubbles discrete and polyvalent mind games must develop so we can learn to live with ever-changing perspectives and without the illusion of one overpowering point of view.

Organizations

I offered some interpretive frames for looking at organizations in the nude, that is: organizations as just a bunch of people. What now follows is not a 'how to', but an attempt to recognize the different aspects of 'just a bunch of people' once we put the organizational clothes back on. Have we developed X-ray vision and can we point out the traces of tribalism, violence and indifference under the organizational garments?

Tribalism is about the aesthetic, the tactile, the proxemic, secrecy and puissance. We recognize tribalism in how people create their realities in organizations, as described for instance by Shaw (2002). Shaw understands the art of creating bubbles in which people find themselves again. She also describes how to enter the bubble she creates is no *sine cure* for employees who are trained to think in terms of efficiency only. They have to get used to her consultancy style which is not based on *a priori* conclusions and advise, but a joint search in the here and now by all parties involved. I call these bubbles free havens (see also Haffmans 2006). The unconditional prioritizing of the inner circumstances of the people who work together over so-called external relations (Sloterdijks form-greenhouse) is precisely what free havens are all about. They are located in the sidelines and margins, the shadows of an organization: "the organizational structure of this conjunction happens to be the network, the cause and effect of a parallel economy, society, and even administration" (Maffesoli 1996: 92). The secrecy needed to tap into puissance again is guaranteed by not naming them free havens, but training sessions or management development programs.

Violence is about indiscretion, origins, revelation of secrets, transgression, expulsion, sovereignty and loyalty. In the violent origins we recognize Schumpeter's creative destruction. The consequences of lack of difference is food for thought when flat organizations are hyped. But also hierarchical organizations can be analyzed in terms of violence. The radiating sovereign and the consequently required hypertransparency can be found in the increase in control systems. In the worldly domain bureaucratic evil, Sloterdijk posits, the vain interruptions of the messengers and the tendency of officials to serve themselves must constantly be contained, be it with sharpened performance control or more efficient educational and reward systems. There are ample examples of repressing freedom in organizations, also under the heading of self-determination (self-steering teams, for instance). Furthermore, the tragic figure of the bell-ringer who reveals organizational misconduct shows us a homo sacer who is excluded both by his company and society. His punishment for revelation is double. We also recognize the mass cuts in lower ranked personnel (that serves as a contingent buffer) and the theatrical persecution of higher ranked managers gone bad. Additionally, Westhues (2002) shows examples of mobbing in academe. He finds that the most likely victim is "an average or high achiever who is personally invested in a formally secure job, but who nonetheless somehow threatens or puts to shame co-workers and/or managers. Such a worker provides no legally defensible grounds for termination."

Indifference is about inertia and implosion, meaninglessness, diagnosis and hyperconformity. The element of polling is taken seriously by Surowiecki (2004), who claims that crowds have wisdom. He pictures organizations that treat their CEOs as superheroes and look on most of their employees as interchangeable drones. This is a pity: organizations should tap into the wisdom of the many. Under the right circumstances, crowds are smarter. These circumstances are diversity (so that people bring different pieces of information to the table), decentralization (so that no one at the top dictates the crowd's answer), an assembler (to reach a collective verdict) and independent participants (who pay attention to their own information and do not worry about what other people think). The best questions to ask are cognitive questions. In fact, this is what Baudrillard called the polling of the masses. If there is indifference, then no information will come out of the mass, because the mass does not reflect. Furthermore, the scenario of labor, writes Baudrillard, resembles the double representation of the power: it must conceal that the reality of labor and production has gone. The ideology of labor, the traditional morale that would keep the 'real' labor process and the 'objective' exploitation out of sight, is not pivotal anymore. The scenario of labor is. We see this in meaningless jobs that are unable

to integrate workers in the organizational passion. Professionalism is at risk when managers put their trust in spreadsheets instead of people. The flexibility in and globalization of the labor market has created disposable jobs and therewith disposable employees. It will be hard to ignore the signs of a laconic workforce that dedicates itself to other interests than the organization.

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