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Making organizations more inclusive: the work of belonging

Abstract

As corporate discourses of ‘openness’ and ‘inclusion’ become increasingly ubiquitous, an important task for organization studies today is identifying how actors might make their organizations more inclusive. The paper aims to understand why and how practices that often embody the exclusionary aspects of organizations could develop to foster a sense of belonging. Studying alternative organizations, such as cooperatives and social movements, where the members may often be more willing and able to develop such practices, could offer lessons about the possibilities and pitfalls of organizational belonging and inclusion more generally. The paper focuses on discussions of financial targets and budgets, practices that confront the members with tensions between their social aims and the need to survive in a competitive market, and that may enact capacities to work through these and other related difficulties. A case of a Spanish cooperative, analyzed using a Latourian anthropological approach, demonstrates two main contributions. First, it builds positively on critical assessments of the pitfalls of corporate constructions of belonging, which seek employee commitment despite persistently exclusionary practices. The case demonstrates how the practical work of belonging can enable organizations to become more inclusive and ‘liveable’. Second, it shows that organizational practices are neither inherently exclusionary, nor intrinsically inclusive. Their role depends on the context and specific socially orientated abilities amongst the members, which can develop through their interactions with budgets.

Keywords

Belonging, exclusion/inclusion, alternative organizations, Latour, anthropology, budgeting, organizing practices

Introduction

Vignette 1: Talking about cost targets, Ines and Juan

“Maybe we should just focus on meeting this target, to make sure we have enough profits for the co-op ... (.) Inter-cooperation will have to wait like Martha and the other directors say?” Ines and Juan were sitting in the library space at the back of their cooperative bookshop, Llibreria, staring at a computer screen showing a budget for the upcoming month. Ines turned and looked anxiously at Juan as she voiced her concerns. “But we’d end up just excluding other perspectives and projects,” responded Juan more calmly. He added, “we’re not alone Ines – austerity, unemployment, you name it – it’s our connections that matter”. She half-nodded and looked less anxious. Pointing to the budget, Juan suggested, “I think, if we hit this target, we can feel confident about doing the inter-cooperation festival with indy-media and the other co-ops and cultural centres”. Ines nodded, more confidently this time. Looking directly at Juan now, she reflected, “I think Martha feels she has to ‘be a director’ ... but I know she’s worried about austerity too, she wants to reach out to the cultural centres in her *barrio*. Maybe we should talk to her about the budget”.

The desire to ‘belong’, to gain a sense of social acceptance and validation, to build lasting and profound connections with others, according to anthropological research may offer a more far-reaching explanation of what motivates, unifies, and fulfils people, than traditional individualistic theories such as *homo-economicus*. Anthropologists typically associate the achievement of belonging with positive, transformational human effects. People tend to

articulate wider aspirations, experience more energy and enthusiasm, and are more likely to band together and share resources with others through their belonging. Detailed ethnographic and historically grounded studies of many different societies around the world support these arguments (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Douglas, 1996; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2001). Organization studies literatures, however, have persistently argued that organizations constrain their members, and make them feel isolated and insecure (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bauman, 2000; Collinson, 2003; Paraque and Willmott, 2014; Parker et al. 2014). The emphasis on economic interests, conventionally embodied in management control techniques like financial budgets, commonly excludes other concerns (Collinson, 2003; Paraque and Willmott, 2014; Parker et al. 2014), making it difficult for people to gain a sense of social acceptance or validation, or to build relations with others. Corporate attempts to mobilize employees' sense of belonging (through mission statements and values, etc.) have been widely criticized as identity regulation that fails to address the exclusionary character of organizations (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bauman, 2000; Collinson, 2003).

Today, with increasingly ubiquitous corporate discourses of 'openness' and 'inclusion' (Dobusch, Dobusch and Muller-Seitz, 2017), an important task is identifying how actors might make their organizations more inclusive. The major aim of the paper is to understand why and how practices that often enact the exclusionary aspects of organizations could develop to foster a sense of belonging. Studying alternative organizations such as cooperatives and social movements, which tend toward a more socially orientated ethos than conventional for-profit organizations, could be expected to provide a setting in which organizational participants are more willing and able to use organizational practices to foster belonging. Cooperatives merit

study in their own right (Atzeni and Vieta, 2014; Reedy, King and Coupland, 2016; Parker et al. 2014), employing 280 million people, 10% of world employment (International Cooperative Alliance, 2017). Studying how actors can develop practices in these alternative organizations to foster belonging could also provide lessons about the possibilities and pitfalls of organizational belonging and inclusiveness more generally. To operationalize anthropological notions of belonging and study the positive transformational effects, the paper's approach draws on some of Bruno Latour's recent work. It focuses on discussions of targets and budgets, practices that confront organizational members with the tensions between their social aspirations and the need to survive in a competitive market. It explores how these organizing practices may enact abilities amongst the members to work through these tensions and other related difficulties.

The paper develops its analysis by examining the case introduced in the opening vignette, Llibreria a Spanish cooperative bookshop that sells books and clothing.¹ The fieldwork took place between January 2010 and February 2011. During this period, in response to crises and instabilities in Spain related to the global financial crisis and recession that began in 2008, Llibreria members organized and participated in wider actions with other organizations and groups. They generally described these actions (e.g. workshops, meetings, demonstrations, and cultural activities) as building "inter-cooperation". Inter-cooperation was an emerging, inclusive form of organization with roots in the Spanish cooperative movement and grass roots activism (Miró and Ranis, 2012). Vignette 1 highlights the danger that narrow economic goals dominate, which is consistent with typical research findings (e.g. Atzeni and Vieta, 2014; Paraque and Willmott, 2014). Ines worries whether their cooperative will have enough profits, apparently

¹ The data analysis in the methodology section explains how the paper extends a previous analysis of Llibreria (Bryer 2018).

aware of pressures that could mean inter-cooperation would “have to wait”. There are tensions surrounding the role of the cooperative ‘directors’, whose duties Spanish law prescribes. Perhaps more surprising, however, is evidence of abilities to work through these tensions. Juan criticizes focusing on profits as “excluding other perspectives”. He reassures Ines empathically that they “are not alone” and, by interpreting the budget, reflexively shares his confidence and enthusiasm about their “connections” with wider groups and concerns. Discussing the targets in this way appears to alleviate Ines’ anxiety. She is able to connect with Martha’s concerns, beyond Martha’s role as director, recognizing that she was “worried about austerity too”, and wanted to “reach out to the cultural centres in her barrio”. Ines also seems to see talking about the budget as a way of pursuing these deeper relations.

Based on analysing a series of vignettes and contextual evidence, the paper finds that organizing practices can develop to foster belonging through specific kinds of ‘work’. It traces the members’ active development of socially orientated skills and sensibilities, exemplified in the budgeting practices, which allow them to work through common exclusionary tendencies and associated tensions in organizations, realizing the positive transformational effects of belonging. The detailed case findings demonstrate two main contributions from studying the construction of belonging in alternative organizations. First, they build positively (Latour, 2013a, 2015, 2016c) on critical assessments of the pitfalls of corporate constructions of belonging, showing how the practical work of belonging can enable organizations to become more inclusive and ‘liveable’ (Latour, 2005: 259, 2014a, 2016c). Second, the findings demonstrate that organizational practices are neither inherently exclusionary nor intrinsically inclusive. Whether they are depends on context and the abilities of the actors for critical empathy, reflexivity, and sensitivity,

which can take shape through reciprocal relations between the actors and their budgeting techniques. It is not the abilities, and not the budgeting, the paper shows, but the creative synergy of combining and developing them through the work of belonging that makes the difference.

The paper first discusses how studying the work of belonging extends the emerging organizational research into alternative organizations. Second, it justifies and explains the research methods employed. Third, it elaborates the ethnographic analysis. Finally, the discussion and conclusion draw out the findings and the wider implications.

The work of belonging

Researchers have recently stressed the need for organization studies to attend to alternative organizations, such as cooperatives and social movements (e.g., Haug, 2013; King and Land, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2011, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016; Parker et al. 2014; Yates, 2015). By engaging with these social actors, Reedy et al (2016: 1553) and others suggest, researchers could “extend their understanding of organization and identity in the contemporary world”, which may require new approaches (see also, for example, King and Land, 2018; Parker et al, 2014). Building on these suggestions, by enabling us to answer why and how organizing practices might foster belonging rather than being exclusionary, studying cooperatives and social movements could offer wider insights about the challenges and possibilities of organizational belonging and inclusiveness.

We can study these processes by developing Latour's notion that we live in "a time of so many crises in what it means to belong" (2005: 262, see also 2013a, 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Anthropological theories have long recognized the dialectic between belonging and exclusion (Douglas, 1996), but an approach using Latour's later work highlights the need to develop this analysis 'positively' (Latour, 2013a, 2015, 2016a), to explore the active construction of belonging as an organizational practice. The work of belonging therefore encompasses those skills and sensibilities by which people actively orientate themselves towards and connect with the concerns of others, gaining a sense of social acceptance or validation, and building deep and lasting relations. Such capacities may be intrinsically human (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Graeber, 2001), but developing them in organizations implies practical work (Latour, 2005, 2013a, 2014a, 2016c). Despite discourses of 'inclusion' (Dobusch et al 2017), in practice conventional organizations often prioritize the economic interests of shareholders while marginalizing others. In these organizations, budgeting and financial targets are often specialist functions used to reinforce the control of management, and are therefore exclusionary.

To develop Latour's positive critique (Latour, 2013, 2015, 2016a), questioning any assumption that organizational practices are inherently exclusionary, the work of belonging encourages studying actors who can draw on socially orientated commitments and skills embedded through experiences and histories of grass roots collective action (Latour, 2005, 2013, 2014, 2016a), such as cooperatives and social movements. Belonging and inclusiveness are often central concerns for these actors, informing the more collaborative and participative practices that they tend to develop (Parker et al. 2014; Reedy et al. 2016). Cooperatives and social movements are not free from exclusionary tendencies, which may often resurface and cause internal tensions (King and

Land, 2018; Reedy et al. 2016; Yates, 2015). However, discussing targets and budgets could exemplify and accentuate the ways in which their members strive to work through their tensions, gradually “establishing connections to the others which cannot possibly be held” in exclusionary forms of organization (Latour, 2005: 262, see also 2013, 2014a, 2016c). This Latourian perspective suggests that budgeting might relate to belonging in alternative organizations because discussions of budgets may bring to the fore the exclusionary tendencies in their organization, encouraging the abilities necessary to work through these problems. They could also enable the actors to think about and perhaps feel more connected to those many perspectives (concerns, aspirations, needs etc.) excluded from conventional modes of organization, and to find ways to include them in actions and resource allocations. It is important therefore to investigate the creative synergy produced through interactions between the organizational members and the budgeting techniques, as potentially shaping more ‘liveable’ organizational forms (Latour, 2005: 259, 262, see also 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016c). What follows develops three sets of ideas and propositions concerning the critically empathic, reflexive, and sensitive work that may be required to construct these conditions for belonging even in alternative organizations, and achieve positive, transformational effects.

Discussing cost targets: critical and empathic work

First, if belonging means that people can develop wider aspirations through their social connections (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Douglas, 1996; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2001), achieving these effects in organizations may rely on the members’ ‘critical’ and ‘empathic’ work. The members of cooperatives and social movements may often be critical of exclusionary

business practices, and seek empathic connections with others (Reedy et al. 2016). Developing such abilities may be necessary to work through the tendency, observed by Webb and Cheney (2014) and others (e.g. Atzeni and Vieta, 2014; Paraque and Willmott, 2014), for cooperatives to narrow their focus onto their organization's economic aims, often articulated through hierarchical structures such as the board of directors. Cooperative directors may often be particularly aware of pressures to be 'competitive' (e.g. matching competitors' prices) and use everyday discussions of cost targets to encourage this awareness amongst other members, causing tensions. Yet, the budgeting discussions could develop to work through these tensions, for example, by providing opportunities for the members to criticize a narrow focus on profit. Instead of being confrontational, the actors might be better able to empathize with the pressures of the directorial role, and to reassure the directors that they can pursue their interests in wider groups and concerns. Budget targets could therefore begin to embody the possibilities for realizing these actions and connections, potentially helping to address the more fundamental tensions, observed by Reedy et al (2016), between aspirations for individual freedom and desires for collective security (see also Parker et al. 2014). The critical and empathic work of belonging could make their organization more inclusive and 'liveable' (Latour, 2005: 259), in the Latourian sense of providing greater freedom for the members to develop their aspirations collectively (Latour, 2014a, 2016c).

Planning and budgeting meetings: reflexive work

Second, if belonging means that the actors can experience greater energy and enthusiasm (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Douglas, 1996; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2001), developing these

effects in organizations may depend on the members' 'reflexive' work. From a Latourian perspective, reflexivity means that the organizational actors actively recognize their wider social and environmental context, understanding that "protection and identity actually comes from resources that exist beyond the apparent limits defining any given body" (Latour, 2016c: 1-2). Such reflexivity may be common amongst the members of alternative organizations, who often seek to address broad social and environmental issues (Maeckelbergh, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016). Yet, developing these capacities may be necessary to work through the common feelings of powerlessness, apathy, and insecurity, which Reedy et al (2016) associate with structural insecurity stemming from their lack of financial and institutional support. While budgeting practices such as planning and cost reduction may often bring such insecurities to the surface, the actors could develop them to analyse reflexively the wider socio-economic context. Instead of feeling helpless, they might plan collective responses with other organizations and groups, potentially gaining energy and enthusiasm through their belonging.

Not everyone is willing or able to assert themselves in discussions (Haug, 2013; King and Land, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016). Paradoxically, some members may have to 'lead', or else compel others to 'participate' (Maeckelbergh, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016). Yet, reflexive work may open up other ways to participate. Identifying cost reductions that support wider social and environmental objectives could, for example, help the less assertive members feel capable of addressing issues that affect many others. Their reflexive work could make organizations more inclusive and 'liveable', both because it helps the members to feel more emotionally and physically secure and energized, and because it is potentially more socially and environmentally sustainable (Latour, 2014a, 2014b, 2016c).

Open meetings: sensitive work

Third, if belonging means that people may band together and share rewards in open and inclusive ways (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Douglas, 1996; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2001), achieving such effects in organizations may require the members' 'sensitive' work. Sensitivity, according to Latour, means actors being sensitive both to the exclusionary tendencies in prevailing institutions, and to the form and content of more inclusive modes (Latour, 2005, 2014a, 2016a, 2016c), capacities that we may expect to find amongst the members of alternative organizations. Developing them may be necessary to avoid the competitive tendencies that can resurface and lead to fragmentation in social movements, as observed by Maeckelbergh (2014) and Yates (2015). Budgeting may often articulate aggressive 'politicking' behaviours. However, discussing and developing budgets in a meeting open to the different actors of a movement could help participants to be sensitive to their differences. It might sensitize them to possible ways of encompassing the differing concerns. The sensitive work of belonging could potentially shape organizations that are more inclusive and 'liveable' because, while not perfect or complete, they do nonetheless include increasingly wider ranges of concerns, so that many different people can belong (Latour, 2005, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2016c).

Methodology

To investigate why and how organizing practices can develop to foster belonging depends on rich data revealing the emotional and symbolical details, and their complex social character.

Ethnography is appropriate because it focuses on the emic view, the insider's (or 'native') perspective (O'Leary, 2016: 226; see also Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Smith, 1998). This focus does not mean that the insider's view is unquestionably accepted. Ethnography achieves robust findings through the collaborative co-construction of an account, that is, through moving between the research question and the data and back to refine our questions and arguments according to what we experience and observe, and what our participants share with us (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015; Latour, 2005, 2013).

Site selection

Llibreria is a small cooperative bookshop in a plaza with a library at the back. The plaza is in a traditionally working class neighbourhood of a Spanish city. There are a couple of cafes, frequented by locals, but the plaza is somewhat derelict and off the 'tourist trail'. Sometimes, though, it becomes alive, hosting meetings, trade fairs, or social events, organized by members of Llibreria, bringing together people from other cooperatives, community and activist groups, and those who live and work in the area.

My first meeting with members of Llibreria was at a workshop on the history of 'inter-cooperation', the inclusive mode of organization that they were striving to build. The workshop traced the roots of inter-cooperation to the history of the Spanish cooperative movement and grass roots organizing. During the event, we chatted about the difficulties of pursuing these aims, and I explained my research interest in the possibilities for organizational belonging and the roles of organizing practices. They were interested in this question and invited me to the

shop to talk more. Through two subsequent meetings in which I met most of the members, we defined the practicalities of the field study.

The field study took place over some 14 months between January 2010 and February 2011. At the time of the research, Llibreria had 15 members, aged between 30 and 40. The collective character of its ownership implied that all members received a monthly salary and a share of the annual profits. The members (eight men and seven women) generally had prior experience of grass roots activism. Five 'members on probation' were younger and less experienced in alternative organizational settings. Spanish legislation requires the members on probation to complete a trial period of 18 months (paid work), before gaining membership status (dependent on a vote of all members). Llibreria also had a directors' board, consistent with the legislation, composed of five members, whom the others elected every two years. The directors were responsible for setting and distributing the budgets that the members used in their everyday decision-making and discussed in regular planning and budgeting meetings.

Llibreria sells books and magazines, mainly about politics, history, and culture, as well as some Spanish novels, and 'counter-culture' style clothing. Daily work activities generally included working in the shop, attending to customers, working on clothing designs, dealing with suppliers, planning and making orders, and attending the free library of books and articles on cooperatives and activism. The members were also involved in an emerging entity known as Coop 67. They founded it in 2009 with other cooperatives, as a way to finance and support actions understood as supporting inter-cooperation. Coop 67 allocated funds pooled from a small percentage of the

annual profits of organizations in the movement that were more established. It also provided logistical and administrative advice.

Data collection

The primary method of data collection was observation combined with informal conversations. I chose a non-participative approach to observation to allow time and space for recording the necessary detailed observations. This approach did not mean that I was aspiring to be ‘objective’. Analysing the possibilities for belonging depended on being able to connect empathically with the members. It meant being reflexive about the tensions that may and did impede such connections. Ethnographers of organization identify a common “clash of work worlds” (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015), where researchers are torn between feelings of identification with their university job and its norms, and with the case organization (see also Chatterton, Hodkinson and Pickerill, 2010; King and Land, 2018; Reedy and King, 2017). I was wary that the organizational members might feel suspicious of me as a university researcher, seeing me as driven by careerist concerns (see also Reedy and King, 2017). Alternatively, there was a danger that they would understand the study primarily in terms of what they could ‘get out of it’.

Developing the focus on the challenges and possibilities of organizational belonging helped to deal with these tensions by encouraging us (the members and me) to think reflexively about our relations, and to recognize them as valuable and meaningful in themselves. This approach did not mean that the study was purely a symbolical or theoretical exercise. Organizational

ethnography, despite its reflexivity, rarely achieves the practical reciprocity to which many aspire (Chatterton et al, 2010; King and Land, 2018; Reedy and King, 2017). Although I could not guarantee the practical value of the research to Llibreria's members, exploring how they might work through the possibilities for exclusion meant the study could hope to achieve some reciprocity. The members appreciated the focus on their budgeting practices as potentially helpful in working through tensions in their organization. Having me there, several commented, helped them to be more articulately reflexive about their practices. Their appreciation of this reflexivity, in turn, helped me to feel accepted, which made it more likely that I might observe and record the construction of their belonging.

During the fieldwork, I visited the cooperative an average of three times a week to conduct observation sessions. The sessions lasted between 2 – 6 hours. I tried to minimize any potentially inhibiting effects caused by my observation on people's behaviour by observing multiple actors at a time. For example, I observed the interaction between two members only if there were other people in the vicinity. Observations included shop-floor dialogues and decision-making, often using budget targets, and meetings involving budgets (usually held monthly). I also observed the participation of several members in an open meeting, implemented by Llibreria involving budgets and reports from several organizations.

I recorded my observations as field notes, supported by tape-recording longer conversations, discussions, and meetings. The field notes aimed to capture cognitive and emotional aspects of the field, including details such as collective mood, and people's body languages and tones of voice. Informal conversations with the individual members formed part of my day-to-day

activity. They were unstructured and often written up in the evening. They provided an opportunity for the members to reflect and for me to share my observations. I was wary of relying too heavily on these data, however, due to the possibility of individual bias. They served primarily as means of adding depth and context to the observations.

Data analysis

Data analysis involved four linked stages. The first stage meant immersing myself in the data (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015), listening to the recordings and reading the field notes repeatedly. I then began to focus the analysis in the second stage by identifying key themes and translating representative passages of the data to explore them in detail. Key themes were those that arose frequently and consistently. To develop the analysis, the third stage meant refining the emerging framework by iterating between it and the literature. Finally, I sought the members' feedback through two return visits to the shop. This included feeding back to the members my observations and analysis. They were generally supportive and offered constructive comments that helped to refine my interpretation. This collaborative approach did not mean censorship by the members, but did support a more robust and detailed account (King and Land, 2018; Gilmore and Kenny, 2015; Latour, 2005, 2013; Reedy and King, 2017).

Drawing on the data analysis of Llibreria, a previous paper (Bryer, 2018) argued that budgeting practices in alternative organizations could encourage more enabling social effects than those commonly documented. It formulated a Latourian notion of belonging as an organizational practice to explain these findings. Yet, budgeting does not necessarily foster belonging even in

alternative organizations. The question of why and how organizing practices, which are conventionally exclusionary, such as budgeting, could develop to foster belonging and make organizations more inclusive, was beyond the scope of the previous paper. Answering it, the previous section explained, requires building on understandings of the possibilities for exclusion in organizations (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bauman, 2000), which can emerge even in alternative organizations (King and Land, 2018; Reedy et al. 2016), extending the earlier study to develop a more complex and robust understanding of the context and capacities that could allow organizational belonging. This distinctive theoretical framework broadens the problem beyond overcoming the contradictions between the social and private aspects of accounting, the focus of the earlier study (e.g. Bryer, 2018: 931-932). It illuminates distinctive aspects of the data to explore how actors may work through the exclusionary tendencies in organizations, making a more inclusive form of organization. The ethnographic analysis that follows thus provides the basis for broad insights about the difficulties and potentialities of belonging and inclusiveness as organizational objectives.

Data presentation

The paper presents the data using vignettes, narratives that describe observed moments from the field. Vignettes help to convey social complexities we could not perceive through presenting only excerpts of dialogue, communicating their dynamic character, and cognitive and emotional details. They can also evoke aspects of the field that are subtle, complex, and surprising. Vignettes can help readers who are unfamiliar with alternative organizations to appreciate their challenges, difficulties, and achievements (Reedy et al. 2016; Reedy and King, 2017).

A criticism of vignettes is that they offer only a ‘snap shot’ view (Reedy and King, 2017). To minimize this problem, the vignettes presented by the paper describe observed moments that are representative of social patterns identified through the study. The analysis also draws on data that helps to contextualize the patterns illustrated through the vignette, for example, by describing how such patterns (e.g. how the directors tended to develop their relations with the other members) played out during the course of the study. There is a danger that there may be too much ‘going on’ in the vignette, confusing the reader or seeming to portray details that have little wider relevance (Latour, 2016a), but investigating the work of belonging helps to avoid this danger. This focuses the vignettes and analyses that follow on the possibilities for exclusion and related tensions in the organizing practices. It traces the abilities to work through these problems, which may develop as the actors shape their budgeting practices.

The work of belonging in Llibreria

The fieldwork took place during an especially difficult period for the cooperative’s business. In the context of Spain’s then shrinking economy, other bookshops in the area had recently shut down, and one of the cooperative’s suppliers had become bankrupt. Many bookshops were lowering their prices, including the more independent businesses, Llibreria’s main competitors. The directors seemed particularly conscious of these pressures. During the initial stages of the fieldwork, they often reminded the other members of the need for profitability. They stressed the importance of matching competitors’ costs and prices, sometimes citing warnings about the recession issued by the main cooperative body, the Union de Cooperativas de Trabajo (UCT),

while apparently paying little attention to the members' concerns to pursue actions related to inter-cooperation. Such practices are similar to exclusionary tendencies observed by Webb and Cheney (2014). Webb and Cheney suggest that through hierarchical organizational structures such as the directors' board, cooperatives may narrow their focus to economic aims, causing internal tensions (see also Paranque and Willmott, 2014). To build on this research, the following vignettes explore the critical and empathic abilities that could enable organizational actors to work through these tensions and develop their wider aspirations.

Vignettes 2 and 3: critical and empathic work

Vignette 2, discussing cost targets, Paulo, Hugo and Carla

“Are you guys on target this month? You know the situation at the moment, profitability has to be our priority right now”. Paulo, a director, said this to Hugo and Carla, two members involved in purchasing, as he came outside to join them for a cigarette and coffee break. “It’s important to keep pace with Libros and the others (competitors)”. Paulo seemed serious, but detached somehow, avoiding eye contact with the others. “Hold on Paulo” said Hugo indignantly, “if we just worry about being competitive, we might as well forget it, and the rest of the world too!” There was a tense moment. Then Hugo seemed to think through his response. He recognized, “I know the targets are important. I know you’re worried, and you feel like it’s your ‘job’ to worry about our profits. But I also know you care about austerity and what it’s doing to this neighbourhood ... (.) The budget shows we can involve those perspectives, that’s what defines who we are”. Though Paulo appeared uncomfortable, he was listening intently.

The vignette shows that organizing practices do not necessarily encourage belonging, even in cooperatives. Paulo appears almost locked into the directorial role of impressing the importance of profitability on the members, unable even to meet the eyes of Hugo and Carla. Meanwhile, Hugo’s initial indignation was a common reaction from members, particularly during the initial

stages of the study, suggesting little appreciation of Paolo's concerns. Hugo was often critical of 'capitalist mentalities' in everyday chats with me and other members, sometimes causing tensions with directors. Paolo on one occasion remarked that Hugo was "not being helpful". Discussions of financial targets may often enact such pressures and tensions, but the vignette helps to see how the actors could develop their practice to work through these issues. By referring to the targets, Hugo develops his critique empathically, identifying with the social pressures of Paolo's directorial role. He also uses evidence from the budget to include in their organizing Paolo's broader concerns about austerity politics in Spain and its effects on the neighbourhood. Paolo seems uncomfortable, but not defensive. This critically empathic work may open more possibilities for him to develop his wider aspirations.

Vignette 3, discussing cost targets, Paulo, Hugo, Carla, and others

Hugo found the cost target that they were talking about in his tablet and showed it to Paolo. Paolo nodded, apparently reassured. "I thought you wanted to connect with the indy-media groups through the inter-cooperation festival?" ventured Hugo. The 'inter-cooperation festival' was an event that some of the members were planning, involving workshops and talks with other co-ops and community groups. At the mention of the festival, some other members came over. Paolo responded with what seemed to be cautious enthusiasm, "Well yes, I think we should all be able to make up our own mind about the news" and that he'd "like to get involved and connect what we do". He still seemed doubtful, "we can't forget about the recession though can we?" "I think the budget shows we can involve indy-media", responded Carla, joining the discussion. She added, "Inter-cooperation is about making connections isn't it? That's how we can get out of the rut of competition Paolo; you don't have to worry so much". Paulo seemed to agree and they all began to discuss the role of indy-media in helping people to understand the "politics of austerity". Paolo seemed more relaxed, becoming engaged in the discussion. He agreed to give a talk at the festival, joking that he didn't want to be "famous".

The vignette gives further insight into the critical and empathic abilities necessary for fostering belonging in organizations. It points to the ways in which budgeting discussions could develop to exemplify these abilities. When they were chatting together informally, Carla often encouraged other members to get involved in wider inter-cooperation actions, on one occasion encouraging Paolo to admit his interest in independent media groups, but he downplayed it as “a bit of a dream, especially in a recession”, apparently thinking of pressures for profitability. Carla was more successful in helping Paolo to overcome these pressures in the budgeting discussion. Consistent with the Latourian framework, she seemed energized by a clear sense of their social connections and their importance. Like Hugo, Carla developed the practice critically and empathically, seeing possibilities in the measures of cost and profit to involve indymedia groups in their actions, and critically “to get out of the rut of competition”. This critical empathic work may construct the organizational conditions for belonging, the evidence suggests, because Paolo seemed better able to express his aspirations and concerns, to joke, and engage more fully in discussion with the other members. The organization could thus become more inclusive and liveable, as Latour suggests, because the actors develop their wider aspirations (Latour, 2005, 2016c).

Still, the directors could not just abandon their concerns about profitability. There was a danger that they felt under pressure to shift their focus onto inter-cooperation related actions, evoking the more fundamentally oppressive character of organization identified by Reedy et al (2016) of stifling individual autonomy. In an informal conversation with me, soon after the above exchanges, Paolo admitted, “Sometimes I almost dread talking to the others about our cost targets”. I asked him to explain: “Well, some have acted like I’m just putting a dampener on

things”. Nevertheless, he reflected, “still, the more we talk about our budgets the more it’s like we share the responsibility of being a director. I mean, we build a critical understanding of our profitability together”. Potentially, then, by developing the daily costing discussions critically and empathically, the members could counteract the exclusionary possibilities recognized Reedy et al (2016). Paolo concluded his point by saying: “so then I realize what we’re achieving and get excited about what I’m doing and the difference I can make connecting with people like indy-media or the unemployed worker groups”.

Over the course of the study, the critical and empathic work of the daily discussions of targets meant the directors generally focused less on profitability as an end in itself, and more on other members, wider groups, and their concerns to develop actions that connected them, such as Paolo’s talk at the inter-cooperation festival. The evidence also generally supported Paolo’s comments about “sharing the responsibility” of the directorial role. For example, in subsequent weeks, Carla frequently used the cost budgets to reassure Paolo and other directors that they could pursue wider goals. In an informal chat, she reflected, “There’s no denying that profitability is a reality right now, but so is inter-cooperation I mean, I think talking about our targets helps the directors especially to see the connections that we can all make, you know, whether that means connecting with what groups like indy-media or the organic supermarkets are working for. Not that it’s easy; there’s no doubt that we’re up against it!”

Sustaining diverse actions with other groups was a challenging and stressful task. As other studies have highlighted (Heras-Saizarbitoria, 2014; Paranque and Willmott, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016), the members of alternative organizations often suffer feelings of insecurity, on material

and psychological levels, stemming from their structural insecurity. The probationary members appeared to suffer most acutely. They were also generally the least active in the cooperative's monthly planning and budgeting meetings, often limiting their participation to expressions of worries and/or apathy. Reedy et al (2016) and Maeckelbergh (2011, 2014) similarly observe a tendency for imbalances of influence to persist, paradoxically compelling some members to 'lead', or to compel others to 'participate'. To develop these points, the following vignettes allow us to trace the reflexive abilities that could help the members to work through these problems, and experience the positive emotional effects of belonging.

Vignettes 4 and 5: reflexive work

Vignette 4, discussing budgets in a planning and budgeting meeting, Ariel, Enrique, and several others

"Can we really sustain all this and keep our jobs? Shouldn't we really just keep our costs to a minimum?" Ariel, a member on probation, normally quiet in meetings, intervened abruptly in a discussion about the upcoming inter-cooperation festival. Her tone was anxious and she looked embarrassed. There was a moment of tension. "Sure we should aim to minimize unnecessary costs," responded Enrique, also on probation, "but we're not the only ones worried about our jobs. Look at the campo". Enrique had been at the cooperative a few months longer than Ariel, and seemed more at ease. By the campo, he referred to Spain's agriculture and countryside, which was affected both by widespread unemployment and by environmental degradation caused by the dominant agro-industry. "I remember you were talking about the organic food co-ops the other day?" He asked. Ariel nodded and smiled shyly. "Why don't you see if they'll run a workshop?" Agreeing, Ariel seemed encouraged.

The vignette points to the need for reflexive work. Ariel's concerns about keeping her job evoke insecurities that may often surface and disrupt planning and budgeting meetings. Sometimes other members complained that the probationary members were "too instrumental" or "missed

the point”. Yet, they might work through these tensions, the vignette suggests, by developing the planning and budgeting reflexively. Enrique was a particularly reflexive member, possibly due to his recent involvement in wider activism. He develops this capacity in the budgeting discussion, as it allows him to encourage reflexivity in others. Enrique reflexively relates the issue of their cost reductions to the wider context of unemployment in Spain, which was particularly acute in the campo. He also suggests that Ariel can contribute to addressing this problem through her connections with the organic food cooperatives. This reflexive work may construct organizational belonging as it apparently helps Ariel to feel more positive and gain enthusiasm. Some members may remain anxious or feel detached. Nevertheless, Ariel might at least participate more positively.

Vignette 5, discussing budgets in planning and budgeting meeting, Ariel, Carlos, Silvia and several others

“Aren’t we going round in circles?” Complained Carlos, a probationary member, looking despondent as some of the directors were discussing whether the final day of the festival should focus on workshops for cooperatives or include for environmentalist groups. “Why don’t we connect things?” asked Ariel, “Aren’t a lot of the co-ops interested in sustainability issues anyway? Unemployment and environmental damage involves all of us really”. She seemed tentative, but to find assurance from referring back to the budget, adding more confidently, “It’s true we’ve done well reducing our costs, and I’d feel like the festival would be more worthwhile. We’re really taking action”. Other members agreed and generally seemed more enthused. Paolo and another director led the subsequent planning, but there was more participation from others. Carlos suggested a way of reducing the organization’s waste, saying, “It gives us more room to expand things, to address the campo issue better”.

Carlos’ initial complaint illustrates frustrations commonly observed in such organizations (e.g. King and Land, 2018; Reedy et al. 2016). Certain actors may dominate discussion, while other members worry about wasting time and feel detached. Despite these tensions, however, Vignette

5 suggests that reflexive work can lead to the transformative effects of belonging. Ariel broadens the discussion reflexively, recognizing that “unemployment and environmental damage involves all of us”. Though she falters, and still seems uncertain (because, perhaps, not everyone is paying attention), she moves beyond her hesitation by developing the organizing reflexively. Ariel interprets their cost savings in terms of their collective abilities to address the wider problems. The cooperative cannot overcome its structural insecurity in any simple way (Reedy et al. 2016). Nor does the discussion completely erase the problem of leadership. Yet, reflexively constructing the practice of belonging may provide at least an opportunity for the more apathetic members, like Carlos, to feel more enthusiastic and energized.

Again, we need to ask whether some members felt under pressure to conform. Pointing to such a possibility, Jeremy – one of the less engaged members, who had only recently become a full member – commented, “I’m not really the participative type, sometimes I feel like a strange bug (bicho raro)”. Still, he reflected, “I’m not one of the people who speaks the most, that’s not my thing, but I feel like I can contribute to the bigger issues we’re trying to address, like the campo, through the plans and finding ways to save costs. We funded a workshop on climate change last week that way. I found how we could save energy with the shop tills and lighting. That was fun”. Jeremy’s comments suggest how cost reduction practices could be developed reflexively, allowing even the more detached individuals to experience the positive emotional effects of belonging.

The tendency over the course of the study was for the quieter members to become increasingly active and engaged, often through cost reduction initiatives that supported the wider discussions

of the planning and budgeting meetings. Their reflexive work may have helped Llibreria to expand its actions with other organizations and groups. By the latter stages of the study, Llibreria regularly coordinated actions with multiple groups and organizations to address broader social and environmental goals such as climate change and unemployment. The members' mode of organization might thus become liveable in the Latourian sense of more socially and environmentally sustainable, as well as giving the members greater material and psychological security (Latour, 2014a, 2016c).

However, several members voiced concerns about dangers for the breakdown of alliances in the inter-cooperation movement. Some alleged that the main cooperative body in Spain, the UCT, was dividing the movement by distributing resources to particular groups, encouraging competition. Others expressed concerns about reproducing the "closed door politics" practised by politicians and big businesses in Spain. Towards the end of the fieldwork, Llibreria members responded by organizing an "open meeting". Representatives from around 50 different organizations took part (including cooperatives, activist, and community organizations, as well as local people), many providing budgets for the discussions. The meeting took place in a large cultural centre near to Llibreria. A focus was how to expand the inter-cooperation movement through Coop 67, the entity founded by Llibreria and other cooperatives to provide finances and logistical support for inter-cooperation actions. Maeckelbergh (2011, 2014) and Yates (2015) recognize a need for social movements to expand, but point to competitive tendencies, which resonate with the worries expressed by Llibreria members. To build on these observations, the final two vignettes illustrate the sensitive abilities that could enable actors to work through these problems, encouraging people to band together and share resources openly and inclusively.

Vignettes 6 and 7: sensitive work

Vignette 6, discussing budgets in an open meeting

Participants were discussing the profits generated by a recent festival financed by Coop 67. Local residents suggested that the profits could support a food kitchen that provided free meals to unemployed and homeless people in the area. Several participants agreed, but others argued that it would be better to allocate the funds to organic farming initiatives in the area. Rodrigo, a volunteer at the food kitchens, complained, “Are we just going to fight over who gets the money?” “But it’s good to debate these issues, it’s an open meeting so we can be open about what we think profits should be used for, isn’t it?” responded Carlos, a member of a printer cooperative. Rodrigo conceded this point, and most people seemed to agree. Carlos added, “Open meetings also mean finding space for everyone I think”. Referring to the cooperative’s budget, he suggested, “We can invest in setting up more food kitchens and use supplies from the farming cooperatives, what do others think?” Carlos’ suggestion inspired support from others. Drawing on budgets and reports, several cooperatives and community groups planned a project to expand the food kitchens and involve the organic farming.

Competing over resources clearly risks excluding some perspectives and causing the breakdown of alliances. It could mean reproducing the aggressive politicking associated with conventional budgeting practices. However, the vignette suggests how the members of a social movement can work through these tensions by developing open discussions of budgets sensitively. Carlos was quite involved in efforts to promote Coop 67 and seemed to be particularly sensitive to the dangers for divisions. Discussing the budgets means he can develop his sensitivity by suggesting ways to encompass the different concerns, inspiring others to join in. While not everyone may agree, the sensitive work seems to create potential for supporting organizations that are ‘liveable’ for more people.

Vignette 7, discussing budgets in an open meeting

“We have to protect our regional interests, we’re the ones generating the wealth but we pay so much in taxes to the others!” exclaimed Gregorio, a member of a local cultural centre. Tensions followed, though most people appeared respectful of Gregorio’s concerns. “You’re right that we need to protect ourselves”, said Elba from Llibreria, “but we can only do that together, isn’t that why we’re talking about our budgets? Instead of behaving like the politicians do? We need Coop 67 to be open to everyone”. This seemed to resonate. Gregorio acknowledged Elba’s point. Some people contrasted the open meeting to the tendency for cooperative funding bodies to become “co-opted” by state institutions and their “closed door politics”. Trina, a local resident and a former member of a cooperative, helped to galvanize the discussion, arguing that the open meetings could allow everyone to be “their own kind of actor” and to “have a voice”. There was a general agreement that implementing open meetings of Coop 67 budgets could help to ensure their inter-cooperation movement was about “open-doors”. The meeting concluded with the participants (including Gregorio) planning the next open meeting, which they agreed should be open to organizations and groups in other regions of Spain.

Gregorio’s call to ‘protect our regional interests’ is reminiscent of the exclusionary narratives commonly articulated by dominant institutional actors (Moisander et al. 2016). Yet, the vignette suggests how actors could develop the organizing practice to sensitize the participants to how they can differentiate themselves from conventional ‘closed-door’ politics. Elba’s point that they need Coop 67 to be “open to everyone”, and Trina’s view that open meetings could support their goal for “everyone being their own kind of actor”, exemplify this sensitive work. It seems that constructing the conditions for belonging, encouraging the different actors to band together, may require shaping a social movement that includes those views that appear negative or contradictory, such as those initially expressed by Gregorio. There were unresolved concerns about the UCT and histories of corruption, and perspectives yet to include. Still, based on this

experience, the sensitive work that could develop through future open meetings might allow the inter-cooperation movement to expand further, enabling many different people to belong.

Discussion and conclusion

The paper set out to understand why and how practices that often enact the exclusionary aspects of organizations could develop to promote a sense of belonging. Studying alternative organizations, where the members may be better able to develop such practices, could allow wider insights concerning the possibilities and pitfalls of organizational belonging and inclusiveness more generally. By developing a Latourian anthropological approach, the paper highlighted the members' discussions of financial targets and budgets. Extending an analysis of their enabling effects (Bryer, 2018), it conceptualized and explored empirically how these organizing practices, which conventionally reinforce management control, could develop by enacting the abilities necessary to work through exclusionary tendencies, constructing the organizational conditions for belonging. A series of vignettes and contextual evidence allowed exploration of the framework, contributing to the study of organizations by supporting two general conclusions. First, the analysis built positively (Latour, 2013, 2016b) on critical assessments of corporate constructions of belonging, illustrating how the practical work of belonging could enable organizations to become more inclusive and 'liveable' (Latour, 2005, 2014a, 2016c). Second, it demonstrated that organizational practices are neither inherently exclusionary, nor necessarily inclusive. What makes the difference are the context and the socially orientated abilities (critical empathy, reflexivity, and sensitivity), which can develop

through reciprocal relationships between the actors and their budgeting. What follows elaborates these contributions by discussing the detailed findings.

Discussing cost targets: critical and empathic work

First, the paper argued that if belonging means the actors can develop wider aspirations through their connections with others (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Gudeman, 2001; Smith, 1999), achieving these effects in organizations may depend on the members' critical and empathic work. The need for such work was clear, even in an alternative organization. In Vignette 1, for example, interpreting their cost targets seemed to remind Ines of the need for profitability, and that inter-cooperation might "have to wait". Her comments hinted at the role of the directors in this narrowing of focus, consistent with similar observations by Webb and Cheney (2014) and others (see also Atzeni and Vieta, 2014; Paranque and Willmott, 2014). Developing these studies, the vignettes illustrated the critical and empathic abilities needed to work through the possibilities for exclusion, enacted as the actors developed their costing discussions. In Vignette 1, for example, discussing the cost budget provided an opportunity for Juan to criticize focusing on profits for "excluding other perspectives". This critical work was empathic rather than confrontational (Latour, 2014a, 2015, 2016c) because it seemed to enable the organizational members to identify with the concerns of others. Ines recognized that Martha (the director) was worried about the effects of austerity politics in her neighbourhood. Her comments implied that discussing the cost target could be a way to pursue these deeper empathic connections. In Vignette 2, while Hugo initially responded with indignation to Paolo's directorial concerns, he developed his critique more empathically, recognizing that Paulo felt it was "his job to worry

about profits”. Hugo also used the target to encourage Paolo to pursue his broader concerns about austerity and his interest in indy-media activities. This critically empathic work developed the conditions for organizational belonging, the evidence indicated, as Paolo then began to express more of his views and aspirations (Vignette 3).

These case findings support a positive Latourian critique of corporate constructions of belonging as identity regulation. Building on the prior studies (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bauman, 2000; Collinson, 2003), they suggest that rather than inducing conformity to narrow economic goals, achieving organizational belonging in practice could depend on enabling the members to develop their wider social aspirations. This develops understanding of the potentially enabling effects of costing interactions (Bryer, 2018), showing how they are inter-dependent with the creation of these organizational conditions. It highlights the specific capacities that may create this context for belonging, as well as the particular challenges that may impede their creation. There was a danger for the members to pressurize the directors, which resonated with the observations of Reedy et al (2016). Comments from Paolo about a feeling of “dread” concerning his costing discussions with the members conveyed this possibility. Nevertheless, Paolo recognized that discussing cost targets was increasingly a way of “sharing the responsibility” of the directors’ role and gaining a “critical understanding of our profitability together”. He reflected that through the practice he was becoming better able to “realize what we’re achieving and get excited about what I’m doing and the difference I can make connecting with people like indy-media or the unemployed worker groups”. Contextual evidence also pointed to the emerging practice of belonging, as the members tended increasingly to mobilize the cost targets to reassure the directors that the cooperative would be able to pursue wider actions. The

directors paid more attention to the members' concerns, and to their own aspirations to develop wider actions, such as Paolo's interest in indy-media. The organization might thus at least begin to deal with the deep tensions observed by Reedy et al (2016) between desires for individual freedom and for collective security. It might become more inclusive and liveable in Latour's sense of allowing the members to develop their wider aspirations (Latour, 2005, 2013a, 2014a).

Planning and budgeting meetings: reflexive work

Second, the paper proposed that if belonging means the actors can experience greater energy and enthusiasm (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Gudeman, 2001; Smith, 1999), eliciting these effects in organizations may require reflexive work. The need for such work was again clear, the evidence revealing insecurities and apathy amongst the probationary members, and resulting tensions, chiming with studies such as Reedy et al (2016). Building on this literature, the vignettes illustrated the reflexive abilities that could help to work through such problems. They took shape as the actors engaged with their planning and budgeting meetings. In Vignette 4, while Ariel's interventions in the meeting caused tensions, conveying her anxieties, Enrique responded by reflexively relating their practice to the widespread unemployment and increasing environmental degradation in Spain's agriculture. He identified potential for Ariel to respond to these problems positively through her connections with organic farming co-ops. This reflexive work constructed the conditions for belonging, Vignette 5 suggested, as Ariel became more enthusiastic and engaged. Enrique was a particularly reflexive member, but the budgeting discussion enabled him to encourage this reflexivity in more insecure members. In Vignette 5, Ariel helped to move the discussion beyond a moment of frustration and tension, reflexively

recognizing their relations to unemployment and environmental damage. Though still hesitant, interpreting their cost reductions reflexively apparently helped her to feel that they could address these broad problems, encouraging others to feel more enthusiastic too.

Organization studies have highlighted the insecurity and apathy commonly linked to corporate constructions of belonging, where employees recognize calls for their ‘participation’ as meaning they have to work more for less (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bauman, 2000). Corporate claims about ‘sustainability’ and ‘social responsibility’ may often provoke similar reactions (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Reinforcing and extending the critique positively, the case suggested that, consistent with Latour, achieving the positive emotional effects of belonging in organizations could require enabling the members to feel they can actively influence their organization, thereby addressing wider social and environmental problems. This perspective extends understanding of the potential for practices such as budgeting meetings to have positive social effects (Bryer, 2018), revealing the specific context and capacities that underpin their development and character, as well as the obstacles that might prevent them from developing. The paradox of leadership (King and Land, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2011, 2014; Reedy et al, 2016) has no instant solution. Certain actors tended to speak more in meetings. There was also a danger for the members to feel forced to participate, as hinted at by Jeremy’s comments, in an informal chat, that he was “not one of those who speaks most in meetings” and sometimes he felt like a “strange bug”. However, Jeremy’s enthusiasm increased through reflexively identifying reductions in costs (related to energy consumption) that he felt contributed to the “bigger issues we’re trying to address”. The contextual evidence supported the notion of an organization becoming more liveable in Latour’s sense (Latour, 2014a, 2014b, 2016c). It seemed to be

moving to become more socially and environmentally sustainable, in the process energizing and giving the members greater psychological and material security.

Open meetings: sensitive work

Third, the paper contended that if belonging means that different people band together and share rewards in open and inclusive ways (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Douglas, 1996; Graeber, 2001; Gudeman, 2001), achieving such effects in organizations may depend on the members' sensitive work. Competitive tendencies can often resurface in social movements, causing fragmentation, as others have observed. Vignettes 6 and 7 built on Maeckelbergh (2014) and Yates' (2015) observations by illustrating the sensitive abilities, embodied and encouraged through their open meeting, that could help the actors to work through such problems. In Vignette 6, some participants of the open meeting disagreed about how to invest profits from a festival, but Carlos helped to work through these differences sensitively by proposing a way to "find space for" the different concerns. He could develop his abilities for this sensitivity in the meeting by proposing and coordinating such a solution, inspiring support from others. Many participants seemed to see the open meeting as exemplifying what distinguished their social movement from conventional "closed door politics". This sensitivity helped to work through worries about protecting "regional interests". It appeared in Vignette 7, for example, in the participant's concerns for Coop 67 to "be open to everyone" and to promote an "open-door" approach. It led to agreement around the decision to implement open meetings of Coop 67 budgets involving organizations and groups in other regions of Spain.

Prior studies have illustrated how dominant institutional actors frame belonging in terms of a competitive and closed community (Bauman, 2000; Moisander et al. 2016). As Latour (2016c) argues, such constructions are paradoxical given the deepening social and environmental problems and crises that connect us all. Supporting Latour's positive critique, the case findings suggested that achieving the positive social effects of belonging when actors band together and share resources, may depend on building social movements that actively strive to encompass excluded concerns and views. We therefore need to understand the positive social effects of open meetings as part of the struggle to create these conditions, requiring specific kinds of sensitivity to work through the dangers for fragmentation. There were unresolved worries about the UCT, and histories of corruption in the cooperative movement. Not all of the actors' concerns were included. Nevertheless, based on the case experience, the sensitive work of developing open meetings could allow the inter-cooperation movement to expand further, furthering the development of organizations that are liveable for more people.

Concluding comments

The members of cooperatives and social movements may not resolve all the exclusionary tendencies in organizations. Not only do they face the continuing challenge and associated tensions of how to sustain their wider actions while making a profit, their organization may continue to limit their individual freedom (Reedy et al. 2016). The paradox of 'leading' (Maeckelbergh, 2011, 2014; Reedy et al, 2016) may also take time to resolve. Nevertheless, the case findings suggested that through specific kinds of practical work, the members could develop their wider aspirations, gain energy and enthusiasm for sustaining their activism, and encourage

multiple organizations and groups to combine their activity more inclusively. Such achievements rely on socially orientated skills and commitments, reinforced through experiences and histories of collective action. Yet, discussions of targets and budgets emerged from the study as enacting the members' abilities in important ways, made visible by developing a Latourian perspective. These conclusions contribute to the emerging organization studies agenda (King and Land, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2011, 2014; Reedy et al. 2016; Parker et al. 2014; Yates, 2015), demonstrating how studying alternative organizations can elucidate some of the practical challenges and possibilities of organizational belonging and inclusiveness. By substantiating Latour's positive critique, they may help to understand how actors in other settings could make their organizations more inclusive.

The paper focused on one detailed case study that, because of its context, was likely to illustrate empathy, reflexivity and sensitivity. To extend this work a comparative ethnographic perspective, examining organizations in other societal settings, would allow testing and developing the findings. Like Spain, many other countries have important grass roots cooperative histories and are currently experiencing a resurgence of activism (e.g. US, Canada, Greece, and France). Studies of alternative organizations in these contexts could bring to light other, related aspects of the work of belonging, but we would expect them to confirm that any attempt to construct belonging within the context of maximizing shareholder profits is likely to fail because organizational belonging depends on the creation of liveable organizational forms. Context is, however, not something fixed or immovable. The paper's conclusions encourage us to seek evidence of the critically empathic, reflexive, and sensitive capacities that might take shape through budgeting discussions even in conventional organizational settings. Most

organizations today promote ideals of ‘openness’ and ‘inclusion’ in their discourses (Dobusch et al 2017). Investigating the work of belonging could reveal how members of these organizations might challenge the exclusionary tendencies that impede such ideals from happening in practice. Such research could shed further light on the apparently deep and irrepressible character of belonging as a force for making organizations more inclusive.

The practical implications of the study are that organizations may be more likely to foster belonging by providing their members with regular opportunities to take part in discussing targets, budgets, and reports. Organizations should not attempt to use such practices as means to other ends. The transformational effects of belonging will not result from calls for employees to ‘participate’ and ‘collaborate’ when the aim is not participation or collaboration, but increasing the return on capital. Even when the aim is participation, some members may not want to participate (King and Land, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2011, 2014; Reedy et al, 2016). More profoundly, organizational belonging depends on allowing the organizational members to recognize in practice that their relations with others are worth pursuing for their own sake. In-depth observations of budgeting discussions could support such a practice, the paper suggested, by fostering reflexivity and supporting efforts for greater reciprocity between researchers and the researched (Chatterton et al, 2010; King and Land, 2018; Reedy and King, 2017). Future studies could develop approaches that more actively involve capacity building and knowledge-exchange activities. The work of belonging provides a framework for researchers and practitioners to test and develop together. Such work might help to build new capacities in budgeting and other conventionally exclusionary techniques (e.g. financial reporting), and to reveal more about the complex relations between these techniques and liveable organizational forms.

Today, few organizational researchers would disagree with Latour's (2014a, 2016a, 2016c) conclusion that it is even more important to recognize the efforts of those demonstrating the possibilities for liveable alternatives. Few, however, have looked for these emerging potentials in such common and integral practices as discussing targets and budgets in decisions and meetings. Opening this possibility to further theoretical scrutiny and empirical exploration has been the paper's overarching concern.

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