Hans Mäntylä

ON "GOOD" ACADEMIC WORK

PRACTICING RESPECT AT CLOSE RANGE

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To my family and
the memory of my father

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates *academic work* – what kind of tasks and duties constitute this particular type of work and how it is experienced, enacted, and felt in the present-day university. By focusing on local stories, personal accounts, and the concrete details of working in five Finnish universities, the study brings the voice of "ordinary" academics to the fore: how do researchers and teachers account for what is happening to the work that they do on a daily basis? What enables academics to become inspired and experience their work as *good, meaningful and morally rewarding* in a situation that critical higher education researchers describe as fiercely competitive and fused with an increase in workload, distress and external control, diminishing autonomy, lower social status and salary?

The thesis is based on a view, where the university is understood as a societal space where people come together with the prime purpose of *learning*. In a series of four studies academics' every-day realities are studied from several different perspectives and at close range. The studies are in many ways based on critical studies and I share a deep skepticism regarding the moral defensibility and the socially divisive patterns involved in neo-liberal forms of university management. Investigating the *local diversity* of academic work in particular units contributes to an understanding of what "good" academic work may consist of and rest on, and how different tasks can be combined in meaningful ways. Exploring *shame* in academia opens up fresh perspectives to reconsider bold claims about the standards of the "good", the "right" and the "excellent" performance in universities. An understanding of different *time perspectives* in academic work demonstrates that the challenge here is not to rationalize or standardize academics' use of time, but to develop academic practices to allow a more balanced coexistence of a variety of times. Creating space for dialogues about *hope and despair* in academia serves as yet another example of anchoring the moral discussion about the meaning of academic work closer to the every-day realities that academics struggle with in their disciplinary units.

The studies look for insights into the special characteristics of academic work by raising questions of both personal and public concern. Drawing on the *participatory action research* traditions, studies on *emotions in organizations*, *narrative research,* and *virtue ethics,* the thesis contributes to both organization and higher education research. It provides enriching accounts of this particular work and offers ways beyond a mere critique of an "irrational madness" which increasingly seems to distract academics from pursuing their work. The close-range research practices employed in the studies serve as examples of how to include *participation and personal experiences* into an open, experimental and engaged approach to research.

The series of studies indicate clearly that academics are both motivated and obliged to search for the nature of the "goods" in their work and for local ways of realizing these. Hence, coercive managerialistic measures aimed at motivating academics to perform their own work according to external standards do not necessarily help academics to do a good job. From the working academics' perspective these measures stand in stark contrast to the autonomous nature of this particular type of work. Hence, supporting academics' own attempts at *renewing the work from within* deserves more attention and support when developing academic work and universities. Academics' resistance towards coercive and normalizing change may, on the other hand, teach us to recognize and respect certain aspects of local cultures that are valuable, meaningful and worth *cultivating.* Hence, *privileging diversity* in academic work is a matter of *practicing respect*, which has a bearing on all parties involved in keeping academia alive.

Key words: academic work; higher education; university change; participatory action research; autoethnography; narrative research; emotion; diversity; shame; time; hope

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Killing" and "inspiring" work in academia?

> So what? It's just academic work… as a professor describes it: "…*The holidays, week-ends and nights go by without any time for your family… or for yourself. It sure is quite killing.*" Or as a researcher says: "…*Everyone can do their own job here… whatever you like, as long as you take care of your teaching responsibility, and don't cross the borders too much… We groan and moan… and conform… but we can't resist, can we.*" And yet, the same people "*enjoy*" their work, consider themselves "*privileged*" and "*free*", and describe the atmosphere of their units as "*good*" and the academic environment as the only one "*where I have ever felt at home.*" "*It's irrational*"… "*some kind of a madness*" they say – and I agree with them (Mäntylä 2000b: 149)

I wrote the lines above in the year 2000 as an introduction to one of the articles republished in this thesis. At the time of writing the lines, I was particularly occupied with issues of shame in academic work. Shame is an emotion that tends to produce conformity. It is evoked by the failure of an individual or a group to live according to their values or commitments, especially ones concerning their relation to others and to the "goods" which others also value (see e.g. Sayer 2005).

Some six years later, this conflicting excerpt still exemplifies both the continuous challenge of and the source of inspiration for my research. What does it actually tell us about academic work in the present day university? What is it that we "*can't resist",* is nearly "*killing*" us, and leaves us with few other options than to "*conform*"? How do "*enjoyment*", "*privilege*" and "*freedom*" fit into this "*madness*"? What is it that inspires and keeps us alive? How can "good" and "meaningful" work be studied, described and understood, while both the prevailing conditions and prospects of academic work seem less than ideal? And, what kind of stories of academic work do we, academics and higher education researchers, actually want to craft, share, and build our research on?

Before going any further there is one question that must be answered first: who are "we"? In this text I use the term "we" in several meanings. First, in a broad sense it refers to an imagined community of researchers and teachers working within disciplinary units[1] in (Finnish) universities (cf. Nixon 2004). This group of academics is being increasingly atomised and dispersed through the fractionalisation and stratification of the institutional context of higher education. Hence, this rhetorical device is not intended to assume the homogeneity of the aca-

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[1] By the term 'disciplinary unit' I refer primarily to workplaces that may also, depending on the university organization, be called 'subject units', 'departments', 'multidisciplinary units' or 'laboratories'. In them academic work involves responsibilities for and expectations to contribute to a number of basic university tasks such as research, teaching, professional services, participation in public discourse, and the governance of these tasks (see section 4, cf. Knight & Trowler 2001)

demic workforce, nor to iron out various differences and inequalities in working situations. It is used to provide space for the accounts of these academics' of academic work in the midst of the ongoing changes within higher education. Second, in a somewhat narrower sense, I use the term "we" when I refer to an equally imagined and heterogeneous group of higher education researchers who explore, write and contribute to the ways in which higher education, universities and academic work are being conceptualised and understood. Third, in the narrowest sense, "we" refers to the various combinations of me and my co-authors in the individual articles of this thesis. Like many others in the broader "wes", we all share concern over recent developments taking place in higher education. This does not, however, mean that Keijo Räsänen, Oili-Helena Ylijoki, Hanna Päiviö and I share perfect unanimity on all issues and views presented in our articles. However, the fact is that three in this series of four studies in my thesis have been done in close co-operation with these colleagues. Hence, I have arrived at some of "my" insights and arguments in this thesis through working and learning at close range with Keijo, Oili-Helena, and Hanna, and also among my other colleagues and research participants (see sections 4 and 5).

The interview fragments cited in the excerpt above can be found in two particular interview transcripts dating back to the beginning of our studies in the late 1990s. In these interviews, 52 academics at five Finnish universities described the everyday realities of academic work in their university units. Among all the interviews, the fragments that I have cited were not especially exceptional. Accounts of a similar kind could be found in most interviews, while inquiring into this phenomenon called "*just[2]academic work*". The academics constantly related how pressed they were with their work, how they did not have enough time to carry out their core tasks and how powerless and stressed they felt because of this (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

On the basis of this research material I must say, it has been – and still is – a tough challenge to incorporate the inspiring parts of "*enjoyment*" and "*freedom*" in academic work into the persistent "*groaning and moaning*" I hear around me in academia. In addition to the interview material, the series of studies also include observations of a variety of situations and events in a number of disciplinary units. I have heard personal stories and been engaged in less formal talks with my research participants and colleagues. Besides reading various documents and reports, my research also builds on my own experience of working in the disciplinary unit of Organization and Management at the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) since the year 1992. During these years I have been involved in several inquiries into the nature of academic work that have been done from different positions, perspectives and in co-operation with other researchers and research participants. I have also become acquainted with the abundant critical higher education research literature (see section 2). In all of these sources the "*groaning and moaning*" certainly tends to outweigh – sometimes even "kill" – the "*enjoyment*" of being or becoming an academic in the present-day university.

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[2] "*Just*" is a translation from an interview statement in Finnish referring to "only". In the interview this notion was certainly not stated as an expression of academic work being experienced as "just" in the sense of "fair", "equitable", "righteous", or "rightful" (cf. Muirhead 2004).

Beyond critique

The critical higher education research literature provides plenty of space as well as reasons for experiencing academic work as "*quite killing*". Turmoil is becoming the norm, it is claimed, while simultaneous, complex and overlapping changes take place in many aspects of the university. The list of ongoing changes seems endless. They have not been freely chosen by most academics and it is difficult to say exactly what drives these developments, or when they first began to take hold. From an individual academic's point of view some of the changes are difficult to identify and they produce outcomes that are difficult to predict or even foresee. The growing demands of a range of unrelated tasks have increased to a point where academics perceive the fragmentation of time and energy as seriously undermining their work satisfaction and their productivity. Not every single academic, perhaps, but among the researchers and teachers I have talked with, the majority would confirm this view.

An obvious response to these challenges seems to be to offer a more thorough critique of the ongoing changes and reforms. Among a growing number of critical higher education researchers this critique is grounded on values that many academics may "*feel at home*" with, such as 'academic autonomy' and 'freedom', 'critical engagement and dialogue', 'intellectual curiosity and honesty', just to name a few. To an ordinary academic like me this kind of critique seems reasonable, well justified, and relevant. It is easy to agree with while it verifies, clarifies, and confirms the "*groaning and moaning*" I hear growing around me – among my colleagues, in the corridors of departments, and between my own ears. I think that the ongoing changes and reforms are certainly worth critical attention, discussion and debate.

The more I read and write about the challenges and problems of academia, however, the more I am captured by this stunning discourse. It draws my attention to significant absences or gaps in our work, and thus, it structures my experience of academic work into gloomy pictures of everyday realities in academia. Complaining and criticizing the present situation may feel good for a while. In the long run, however, mere critique does not exactly help in making sense of one's everyday work. It says more about what is wrong than about what can be done to protect autonomy and/or to improve the daily work in local contexts. This is especially so if academic managers and administrators working within the higher education system do not take this critique in earnest. At worst, it only reproduces the "*groaning and moaning*" without any alternative perspectives into this "*madness*".

Hence, I do not focus only on the problems and thus contribute only to the reproduction of the massive critique of the contemporary developments in higher education in my thesis. Instead, I have gradually engaged in a search for alternatives during the research process. By alternatives I mean, for example, looking for different perspectives, stories and insights to the discussion of what enables academics – not only to cope, "*conform*" and endure – but also to "*enjoy*" one's work, to be inspired and "*feel at home*" within academia. Searching for inspiration from various sources, such as Participatory Action Research traditions, studies on emotions,

and narrative research (see sections 3 and 5), does not, however, mean that I would exclude or ignore the critique of the ongoing changes in academia. What I am striving for is a shift in perspective and emphasis. With this shift I aim at complementing critical higher education research findings by looking for answers to questions like what is the best of what is, how do you find it, nourish and develop it? (see Gergen 2003) In other words, what is it that keeps us going and alive, despite the "*irrational madness*" the academics talked about in the opening excerpt above?

The series of studies and articles

The main heading of my thesis – ***On "Good" Academic Work*** – signifies an effort at searching and accounting for "good", meaningful and morally rewarding ways to work in academia. To me, this means taking an interest in the local stories, personal accounts and concrete details of the work pursued in universities. The main characters of these stories and accounts are ordinary[3] researchers and teachers working in disciplinary units, caught up in the daily difficulties, pleasures and moral contradictions of their mundane working life. Hence, the prime focus is on the world *inside* the academic institution. Inside refers to the situated experiences, accounts and stories of this particular group of academics as they try to do their job and cope with and respond constructively to the endless demands of the ongoing changes in higher education (cf. Lawrence & Suddaby 2005).

In my thesis this effort is based on a series of four studies on academic work. The studies date back to the mid 1990s when I worked as an assistant in the unit of Organization and Management at HSE. In retrospect, this evolving research process began when I participated with some of my colleagues in efforts to renew the working practices in our home base. Our efforts begun, as is customary in the field of higher education, by experimenting with various practices in teaching and learning. We focused on the introduction of new courses, learning and teaching methods, and changes in curricula. Gradually these autonomous efforts broadened to a whole set of academic activities: teaching work, research work, external services, and the governance of our work unit. My local, discipline-specific experiences and perspectives on academic work also broadened when I participated in various administrative activities at HSE in the following years[4].

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[3] To me, using the word "ordinary" means providing space to those academics' voices who are not necessarily the ones who perform and score the highest points in various academic beauty contests and excellence rankings. "Ordinary academics" refer thus to the less heroic, more common, and "average" academics, who may also be understood as the majority of all academics (see also Räsänen, forthcoming). Michel de Certeau (1984) would call them the marginalized majority.

[4] Wider perspectives opened up through working on the board of the Center for Innovations in Education, as a member of formal working groups focusing on the governance and development of the bachelor's and master's degree curricula, while training student tutors and mentors at HSE, and by participating in both formal and less formal discussions on teaching strategy, teaching methods and teaching facilities at HSE.

Something like a hobby and working extra hours out of simple interest turned gradually into an ongoing research initiative. In 1998 I joined a research project on academic work with Keijo Räsänen and researchers from the department of Sociology at the University of Helsinki[5]. The project was a comparative study of academic work in three disciplinary units, in three different universities in Helsinki (see Mäntylä 2000a, Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001). Hence, the focus of my research shifted from studying and experimenting with our local working practices among our colleagues in our own working unit to comparing these efforts within a set of three different academic units. Doing interviews and encountering some 20 academics from the other two units provided us with a rich diversity of experiences and views on pursuing academic work.

Building on our own local experiences and the research material gathered in this project I attended my first workshop in the field in 1999 with Keijo Räsänen. The workshop "*Ideals and practices of University Research*" was organized by the Science Studies Unit at the University of Tampere. The conference, "*Re-Organizing Knowledge, Transforming Institutions: Knowing, Knowledge, and the University in the 21st Century*", took place at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, USA. Writing and working on our conference papers that we had presented in Tampere and Amhearst resulted later on in an invitation to publish our paper in the journal *Organization*[6], and thus, to one of the articles republished in this thesis (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001).

In the second study in the series the direction shifted from going outwards to turning inwards again. Here I turned the focus from comparing academics' accounts of their work across disciplinary borders into studying my own lived experience of academic work in depth. The theme evolved from *preserving academic diversity* to *dealing with shame in academic work*. Attending the theme group "*Academics at work*" in the 16th EGOS Colloquium: *Organizational Praxis*, at HSE, in 2000, provided the foundation for the second article. Introducing the conference paper to one of the editors of *Psychiatria Fennica*[7] resulted, again, in an invitation to publish it in this research publication series (Mäntylä 2000b).

By this time I had also joined the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Finland and got to know a number of higher education researchers. The idea of the third study started to take shape while discussing the experiences, interview material and findings we had come across with Oili-Helena Ylijoki from the University of Tampere. Now the perspective on academic work shifted outwards again, from my personal introspection on 'shame' into an exploration of 52 academics' accounts of their work at five Finnish universities. The theme changed from focusing specifically on the emotions in academic work to an exploration of a heavy *time pressure* that seemed to be a penetrating theme in the academics' accounts of their work. In the series of studies the third article thus reports on our findings on the time perspectives academem-

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[5] Including Marja Alestalo-Häyrinen and Karoliina Snell.
[6] *Organization. The Interdisciplinary Journal of Organization, Theory and Society* – Special issue on Re-Organizing Knowledge, Transforming Institutions: Knowing, Knowledge, and the University in the 21st Century; editors: Marta Calás and Linda Smircich. Volume 8, no. 2, 2001; Sage Publications.
[7] Psychiatria Fennica 2000, 31st annual volume, Foundation for Psychiatric Research Publication Series.

ics seem to live by in academia. After submission this article was accepted for publication in *Time & Society*[8] (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

By this time an additional "we" was established – the Management Education Research Initiative (MERI) – when a group of colleagues[9] started to hold regular working seminars at HSE. The purpose of the MERI initiative is to advance critical understandings of universities and business schools as sites of education and as sites of academic work (see www.hse.fi/meri). The *autonomous renewal* of academic work and the development of new forms of academic practice represent the interests of this group of researchers. Autonomous renewal refers to the issues of according to whose knowledge, interests and efforts is academic work being developed – '*inside out*' by the academic faculties themselves or '*outside in*' by an increasing number of managers, staff trainers, consultants, and/or other non-academic constituencies within and around the university institution (see e.g. Nixon 2001, MacIntyre 1985, Räsänen et al. 2005, Räsänen 2007, Meriläinen et al., forthcoming).

The sources of inspiration for the fourth study in my thesis have grown out of discussions in the MERI group. In this study we, Hanna Päiviö and I, shifted our perspective back again, from the extensive group of 52 academics working in different universities in Finland, to a smaller group of colleagues working at HSE. The theme changed from the temporal structures into an exploration of *hope and despair in academic work*. This text was originally published as a book chapter in Finnish: "*Toivon ja epätoivon äärellä akateemisessa työssä*" (Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a), in a book edited by Helana Aittola and Oili-Helena Ylijoki (Aittola & Ylijoki 2005). For the purpose of the thesis this text has been translated into English and republished with the title "*Hope and despair in academic work*."

Hence my thesis is based on a series of studies in which my understanding of academic work has broadened gradually from individual efforts at renewing local teaching practices within our home base into a range of issues, questions, and means by which academic work can be explored. Consequently, the purposes, aims, and insights of my research have been unfolding and also become clearer gradually, along the way (see section 5). It may be rare that academics study the "lived realities" of their own organizations, e.g. our "own" universities and the more delimited settings such as departments, disciplinary units, and research groups in which we are active. It may also be that it is difficult and demanding to study something one is heavily involved in. Personal involvement and engagement should not, however, rule out an inquiry. They may function as an asset as much as a liability.

Assuming the agency of ordinary academics, respecting and staying with their accounts of academic work and the human life they represent, also opens up an avenue to something more than treating these stories only as data to be analyzed and categorized. This involves accepting the idea that stories are not just another source of data to be appropriated for the

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[8] Time & Society. An International Interdisciplinary Journal. Volume 12, 2003, Sage Publications.
[9] Including Anne Herbert, Kirsi Korpiaho, Kirsi LaPointe, Susan Meriläinen, Hans Mäntylä, Hanna Päiviö, and Keijo Räsänen, at the time of the first working seminars.

purpose of a detached researcher. It involves thinking of the life being expressed by the characters of the stories as stories to be respected and engaged with. It represents a move away from assuming the stance of a disinterested spectator toward assuming the posture of an engaged, embodied, and vulnerable observer (see Bochner 2001, Bochner & Ellis 1999). In the words of the subtitle of my thesis, it involves **practicing respect** and staying **at close range**. Accordingly, an active and reflexive reader who wants to enter into dialogue with these stories also enters into a deliberation of the ends and purposes of academic work – of what it may mean to experience academic work as good, meaningful and worth striving for (cf. MacIntyre 1985). This is what I invite you to, while being with this thesis.

The plot of the introductory essay

In this introductory essay I will next provide a brief overview of the field of Higher Education Research (HER). I begin section 2 by introducing some of the main topics and themes of HER and position my studies on academic work in relation to the relevant streams in the field. Section 2 continues with a critical account of the current conditions and prospects of academic work. Here I present an array of the timely issues and concerns reported by researchers in critical higher education literature. I also describe briefly how HSE can be seen as a clear example of the ongoing neo-liberal transformation of higher education. These overlapping issues, challenges, and concerns provide plausible answers to the intriguing question of *what is it that is nearly killing us*?

Hereafter, I elaborate on my reading of the HER literature and raise an additional question: what kind of resources do the "mainstream" and the "critical" higher education literature actually provide us with? Treating academics as mere "implementation problems" of contemporary higher education policies seems customary in the mainstream, while criticism of the ongoing changes seems to be the plot in the latter literature, which I have mainly been working with. In respect to the critical literature, the main challenge in my studies, however, has been to make a shift in perspective – to deviate from reproducing and maintaining only gloomy images, problems, and deficits in academia towards looking for answers to the substantial question of *what is it that inspires and keeps us alive*?

In section 3 I present the sources of inspiration that I have found helpful in this quest, that is, in the series of studies on academic work on which this thesis is based. These sources include the traditions of Participatory Action Research (PAR), the growing field of studies on emotions in organizations, and a glimpse of the tradition of virtue ethics provided by Alasdair MacIntyre (1985). I then proceed to clarify how these sources have provided me with ideas and alternative perspectives in respecting diversity at close range, in understanding and dealing with emotions, in integrating multiple time-frames, and in grasping the moral bases of hope in academic work.

In Section 4 I briefly re-present the main themes and issues that I/we have been focusing on in the four articles, in the order of their publication. The purpose behind all of these studies has been to find fresh perspectives and voices with which to speak about, to learn from, and to build on experiences of doing *good* academic work. This series of four studies serves here as an example of the insight, according to which I can provide the reader with a variety of affirmative answers to the question of what is it that makes academic work meaningful and keeps academics alive, even in the seemingly "*irrational madness*" of the present-day academia, by staying close to the academics' own accounts of their working situations.

In section 5 I reflect on the research practices and methods that I have pursued in my/our "close-range" research. "Close-range" is a parallel notion to 'participatory' and 'engaged' research, which I found when looking for an apt title of my thesis. In this section I, first describe in more detail the research practices we have tried out and followed in the series of studies. Next, I describe how the research motives and practices have evolved in the series of studies while going back and forth between looking inward at my personal experiences of working in the subject unit of Organization and Management at HSE, and focusing outward on the social and cultural aspects of pursuing academic work in a number of other university units, too. I close section 5 by relating the research practices with the methodical traditions of conducting different types of ethnographies, action research and narrative research.

Finally, in Section 6, I discuss the contributions and the implications of the series of studies. I advocate recognition of the fact that we do have a range of alternatives to choose from and act on. In terms of higher education research, my/our studies offer fresh examples and methods of how to conduct engaged and constructive research. Rather than verifying only factual findings the essence of the studies lies in looking for insights into the special characteristics of academic work by raising questions of both personal and public concern. The thesis provides enriching accounts of academic work by studying it 'from within', from several angles and perspectives. The series of studies also offers ways beyond a mere critique of the "*irrational madness*" which seems to increasingly distract academics from pursuing their work in present-day academia.

In terms of implications, the thesis suggests that imposing coercive measures aimed at motivating academics to perform their *own* work according to external standards is certainly not the only alternative for making universities better places for the academics to do a good job in their locally unique and internally diverse units. Appreciating and supporting academics' own attempts at renewing the work '*from within*' may lead to more sustained results than letting academic work be managed and transformed by (non)academic managers, and/or other tangential bystanders of this particular bundle of tasks. Hence, *privileging diversity* in academic work is a matter of *practicing respect*, which has a bearing on all parties involved in keeping academia alive.

2.   HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH: Taking a Stance Towards the Recent Developments in the Field

Positioning in the field of Higher Education Research

Like any exploration into the nature of academic work in the present-day university, the series of studies in this thesis is also intertwined with an array of ongoing changes in academia. These shifts and changes have been widely analyzed and reported in higher education research throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In fact, hundreds of books have been written on the purposes and cultures of universities, making it one of the most self-reflective of modern institutions (Meyer 2002). This literature provides a broad context for my research.

One of the distinct features of this literature is the view that at the basis of the social dynamics of higher education is the pursuit of *learning* - new knowledge is sought, constructed, maintained, disseminated and shared in universities through research, teaching, professional service and public discourse (see e.g. Clark 1983). From this perspective, the university is perceived in particular as a civic space: a space where people come together with the purpose of learning together, with respect for the practices that sustain such learning (see e.g. Nixon 2003, Nixon 2004).

This feature also distinguishes higher education from many other social systems. As academic organizations, higher education institutions can be seen as organized anarchies (Cohen, March & Olsen 1972), as collegial discussion clubs, or as political playing fields (Birnbaum 1989; see also Välimaa 1995). However contested and debated these views may be (see e.g. Rinne & Koivula 2005), it is difficult to understand both the dynamics and the possible "rationality" of academic life if we base our research (only) on intellectual devices developed in other fields of human activities, such as economics and public administration. According to Cohen and March (1986), for example, the higher education system lacks the centrality of purpose and clarity of goals that one might associate with industrial production. Hence, the university ought not to be viewed as just another business. The dynamics of higher education should rather be examined with the perspectives and conceptual tools that recognize the epistemic, disciplinary, institutional, and local traditions of academic communities (Välimaa 1995: 15-16).

Topics and themes of Higher Education Research

The term "university" has a venerable history and its definition remains highly contentious. The first universities are most often identified as those of Paris and Bologna, which were founded in the 12th century. Some scholars, however, contend that the university may have begun many centuries earlier, depending on the definition employed (see Denman 2005, p. 9-13).

Accordingly, there is no single definition of a university and various kinds of inquiries into how the *pursuit of learning* can, could or should be organized constitute the general field

of *higher education research*. In general, these inquiries are about: (i) the kinds of social orders that are produced when new knowledge and learning is sought, (ii) the national higher education systems and how they are organized, (iii) the role of universities in the reproduction of the society, (iv) various kinds of cultures that can be found within universities, and (v) how research, teaching and learning can be characterized in terms of substance or in terms of academic work within various university units (Ahola & Välimaa 2002, 12).

The field of higher education research is occupied by a growing number of actors with different interests. Higher education research is conducted from various roles and positions - in different disciplinary traditions, in interdisciplinary units set up especially for higher education research and/or development, in research centers, in administrative units, from different scholarly positions, and by various consultants and evaluators. For an overview and a brief summary of the development of the field, see for example Altbach & Engberg (2000).

Depending on the position a researcher takes, the issues of higher education can be approached from either the 'outside' or the 'inside'. An *outside* position refers to conducting research in terms of how universities relate to the needs of the state, economy, or citizens. An *inside* position refers to inquiries into higher education in terms of how academics, managers, and students negotiate their tasks, how they understand the university and act within it (Edwards & Miller 1998; in Jary & Parker 1998). In terms of knowledge interests, the internal interest focuses on the processes taking place inside higher education institutions, whereas the external one is more concerned with the cultural or structural dimensions existing outside higher education institutions (Välimaa 1995: 25). Both stances and perspectives are evident in different research approaches and traditions within the general field of higher education research.

Higher Education Research in Finland

In Finland, higher education research has a history of occasional and sporadic studies throughout the 20th century. The first catalog of Finnish higher education studies (Lillberg, Koskinen & Loikkanen 1972) was published in the early 1970's. Since that time a substantial part of higher education studies has been focused on the administration, management and productivity of universities, on teaching and learning methods, student access, and the system of degrees at Finnish universities (Ahola & Välimaa 2002). The field has gradually broadened during the last 15 years and besides individual research endeavors in different universities standing units and chairs of higher education research have also been established in the field. The Research Unit for the Sociology of Education (RUSE) at the University of Turku was set up by the end of 1980s. The post of the head of this unit was changed into a professorship in the sociology of education in 1995. The University of Jyväskylä has a long and broad tradition of research in the field, and at the turn of the century the research conducted there was organized into two research groups, one focussing more on pedagogical issues and the other emphasizing higher education as a societal phenomenon. A professorship in higher education research was established at the

University of Jyväskylä in 2001 (Ahola & Välimaa 2002, see also Kuoppala et al. 2003). Also, several pioneering research groups in the broad field of higher education research and science studies had been established at the Universities of Jyväskylä, Turku, Tampere, and Helsinki, before we established the MERI group at HSE.

Relevant streams in Higher Education Research

As an academic field, higher education research belongs to the social studies (Fulton 1992) and it is characterized by a variety of approaches, traditions and methodologies (see Välimaa 1995). The range of external and internal perspectives, their connections, contradictions, and complementarities is wide and complex (see Clarke 1984). Reviewing, categorizing and drawing the lines between different streams of research within this fast growing literature would be a challenging task in itself. As a broad overview of the field, however, I see the relevant streams in the following way:

The two main parallel research traditions are "*Higher Education Research*" and "*Science Studies*". In the literature "Higher Education Research" may also be called "*Studies of Higher Education*". In this tradition, the focus has been on structural and organizational issues within the higher education system (see e.g. Clarke 1983, Becher & Kogan 1992). These include, for example, issues regarding student access/selection into higher education; the employment of graduates; the management, organization, and financial issues of higher education; and international trends within the field (see e.g. Ylijoki 1998, Becher 1995).

Science Studies, on the other hand, focuses on issues of the (social) construction of knowledge and science(s) (see e.g. Whitley 1984). In this tradition researchers track the history and dynamics of science as a social institution, the philosophical basis for scientific knowledge, as well as the diversity and special characteristics of various disciplines (Hess 1997). Here the research focuses heavily on studying one part of academic work, namely, research and the production of knowledge. In my thesis, however, academic work is studied as a 'bundle of tasks' (Kalleberg 2000) that includes five different and interdependent tasks (research, teaching, public discourse, professional service, and the self-governance of these tasks; see section 4). My focus therefore differs clearly from the Science Studies and this is why I do not locate my studies in this tradition.

Furthermore, I understand the "*Studies of Disciplinary Cultures*" as a tradition that is located at the interface of the two main research areas described above. In this tradition sciences and disciplines are conceptualized particularly as socio-cultural entities, and the focus is directed to the internal life of academia, its practices, values, beliefs, and traditions (Ylijoki 1998). From this perspective, the university is not conceptualized as a uniform whole but as something that is composed of differentiated and diverse "small worlds" (Clarke 1987, see also Becher 1989). The starting point in this tradition is thus the notion of the difference in epistemic structure (Becher 1989) or institutional missions or traditions that structure the internal life of

academia. Hence, the aim of cultural studies is to understand and explain the differences by assuming that 'culture' in academic communities carries the shared social construction of reality (cf. Välimaa 1995: 31-32). Even if the Studies of Disciplinary Cultures constitute only a relatively modest fraction between the fields of Higher Education Research and Science Studies, it has an established position and the significance of this perspective is generally recognized (Ylijoki 1989).

In respect to these broad research traditions my studies can be positioned into one of the streams of Higher Education Research tradition, namely "*Studies of Academic Work*" (see e.g. Smyth 1995). In this stream the focus lies on studying what academics do as a work process, what kinds of tasks and duties constitute this particular type of work, how it is organized, governed and controlled, how it is enacted and in whose interests, and how employment relationships are changing in the present-day university (ibid., 2). Instead of focusing on the views of (university) managers or politicians regarding what is or should happen to higher education institutions, my studies bring the perspective of researchers and teachers to the fore: how these academics perceive the ongoing changes inside universities and what is happening to the work they actually do on a daily basis. That is, I focus on the situated experiences of academics working in disciplinary units as they try to do their job and to cope with and respond constructively to the ongoing changes within academia (cf. Lawrence & Suddaby 2005).

My studies also contain elements of the Studies of Disciplinary Cultures. As the focus in the Studies of Disciplinary Cultures is more on the values, beliefs, symbols, norms and traditions that constitute diverse *cultures* within and between different sciences and disciplines, the focus in this thesis aims at understanding academic *work* in terms of a particular bundle of tasks and respective activities (see Kalleberg 2000), in terms of working conditions and changing terms of employment, for example.

Next, I will briefly present some of the overlapping concerns on which researchers report in the critical higher education literature. However, this task created a particular dilemma while writing this introductory essay: how to review the relevant research literature on the critical perspective without sinking too deep into the academic malaise opened up by it? The purpose and aim of my research was not to find answers merely to the question of *what is killing us*? Before taking up the main question - *what is it that keeps us alive?* – I will briefly present some of the overlapping concerns of the critical perspective in the following pages. These issues and concerns will also contextualize my search for alternative sources and perspectives to the discussion of what makes academic work as good, meaningful and worth striving for.

The critical account of academic work and its current conditions

The critical higher education research literature that I have mostly been reading during my research process provides both plenty of space and fertile ground for the "*groaning and moaning*"

I referred to in the beginning of this essay. A central and recurring statement in this literature is that the whole academic institution is facing vigorous and complex changes (e.g. Considine 2000, Nixon et al. 2001, Trowler 2001a). These overlapping changes touch the meaning of the whole academy, its basic character, mission and duties, its funding, management and governance, the relationships between the university and other societal actors such as business corporations and the state. The changes also touch the organization of university work as well as the terms and conditions of academic employment.

Focusing only on the changes throughout the 1990s and early 2000s is not to imply that there once was a Golden Age when the pursuit of research, teaching and scholarship was an easy ride. In the days when the church was the most powerful social institution, universities served the needs of the church by preserving its doctrine and training its clerics. Later, the universities took on a major function of training the élite – the administrators and the leading professionals – and providing much of the scientific knowledge that underpinned the industrial revolution. Now we are moving into a period where, arguably, the major source of power in our post industrial society is no longer the church or even the state, but the global economy, transnational corporations, and the knowledge-based economy, which shapes higher education (Rowland 2001). It has also been pointed out that both traditional academic and market-oriented values and practices have long roots in academia, so that the recent change concerns a shift in the balance between them, not the appearance of something totally new (Martin & Etzkowitz 2000, Ylijoki 2005, Ylijoki 2006, Bone & McNay 2006).

Changes in higher education policy

In a recent study about the changes in higher education in Australia, for example, Deborah Churchman (2004, cf. Marginson 2000) identifies four main factors contributing to changes in academic life over the past 15 years. These are 'globalization', 'funding', 'loss of collegiality' and the 'deconstruction of the academic profession'. Nixon et al. (2001), for another example, write about the ongoing changes in the UK over the past 30 years. They argue that the conditions of academic work, as well as the structures of accountability and professional accreditation have changed considerably, while a dramatic expansion in student numbers is combined with a steady reduction of resources available for managing major changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment. Other higher education researchers use an array of different notions and concepts such as 'commodification', 'privatization', 'corporatization', 'managerialism', and 'bureaucratization' when contributing to the vast literature that exists on the multiple 'crises' currently facing universities (Mackinnon & Brooks 2001, Nixon 2003). For diverse readings on the debate about the 'crisis' of higher education see e.g. Berube & Nelson (1995), Hart (2001), Readings (1996), Jary & Parker (1998).

Under-resourced education for the mass of diverse students

One of the most tangible changes in higher education, according to the literature, is the dramatic expansion and diversification of the student population in higher education. The former élite system of higher education with highly restricted access has been replaced by a system of mass higher education in many countries (see e.g. Nixon 2001). New universities have been established, polytechnics have been transformed into universities, and other institutions have been granted a higher learning status as they now offer formal graduate and post-graduate programs. The open university has further expanded the student population. The massivication opened up opportunities for a more diverse student population in terms of social class, ethnic groups, gender, age, and consequently, in terms of the students' facilities, interests, expectations and modes of participation[10]. However, it is a matter of debate whether this development has gone far enough and has been fair in all respects.

A bigger and less homogenous student body has speeded up several changes in curriculum design, teaching and the assessment of teaching work. Diversification of course content and structure coupled with an increased emphasis on differentiating the educational needs of students with modularization and credit accumulation have become important organizational elements in many universities (Nixon et al. 2001, Trowler 2001b). Programs and curricula are being renewed and combined in various ways, students from different countries and institutions travel and participate in different programs, and different teaching methods evolve with various emphases and appropriateness. In Europe, these shifts have been intensified particularly by the so-called "Bologna-process" (see Välimaa et al. 2006).

A considerable challenge in most universities is, however, that a major part of these challenges have to be tackled by disciplinary units with minor or no extra resources. In British universities, for example, close to 40 per cent less was spent on educating each university student in the year 2000 than was the case in 1990 (Rowland 2001). In Finland, the number of university students increased by 66% between 1988 and 2002, the number of graduates by 49%, but the teaching staff[11] increased by only 3% (Puhakka & Rautopuro 2004). Between 1994 and 2004 the number of entering students increased by 17%, the number of post-graduate students by 50%, the yearly number of completed masters' degrees increased by 31%, and the number of doctoral degrees doubled. At the same time, the yearly teaching manpower in Finnish universities increased by only 9% out of which less than 3% accounts for teachers working on budget funding (see Ylijoki & Hakala 2006).

The figures vary somewhat in different countries, in different universities, and in different investigations but the general trend seems to be that more work and more diverse work for a bigger, more international[12], and less homogenous student body has to be handled with either

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[10] Various modes of participation include at least full-time & part-time students, exchange students, and various forms of virtual students. (See also Ylijoki & Hakala 2006).
[11] The number of teaching staff in terms of yearly manpower.

the existing volume of resources or an even smaller volume (ibid.; Hakala et al. 2003, Nixon et al. 2001)

Erosion in terms of employment

Another substantial concern in the critical higher education literature is that alongside a significant decline in the real value of academic salaries some major changes in the staffing structures and terms of employment in higher education are also taking place. The number of temporary and casual workers has grown substantially while the faculty members with tenure constitute an ever-decreasing part of the entire staff in most universities (see Nixon et al. 2001, Churchman 2004). Several new categories of academic workers have been created, each having distinct terms and conditions of employment, including salary scales, pay settlements, benefits, career chances, duties and prerogatives in university governance (Churchman 2004, Välimaa 2005, Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a). The occupation of a university teacher, for example, no longer automatically ensures autonomy and status. A number of researchers state their concern over the erosion of traditional university structures as status and other differentials increase, especially between staff with permanent appointments and those with temporary or part-time contracts (see Nixon et al. 2001, Churchman 2004, Välimaa 2005, Rhoades & Slaughter 1998, Rhoades 1998, Kogan et al. 1994, Smyth 1995).

Forced "entrepreneurship"

Nuances of academic life are challenged even further by changing funding patterns and new forms of university governance. In many countries the government funding to higher education is declining. A growing part of the decreasing resources has also been subordinated to more intense competition both within and between different universities (Churchman 2004, Dearlove 1998b). Consequently, academics have had to consider how to best organize themselves to compete for new resources and find ways of self-funding their work within their disciplinary units, departments and universities. New kinds of partnerships, alliances, liaisons and modes of co-operation are established with various business corporations; license and patent agreements are concluded; the pressure to increase funding by student fees is growing; university teaching is modularized and programmed into marketable learning products, and universities are privatizing parts of their operations.

In sum, the share of revenue gained from the marketplace has grown and "innovative universities" are characterized increasingly in terms of their 'entrepreneurship' rather than their 'scholarship'. The university and its faculties are brought into line with economic production and through 'academic capitalism' higher education is being repositioned as another industry,

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[12] While the number of foreign students has increased by 82% between 1994 and 2004 the university departments are also expected to offer more and more of their courses in English (Ylijoki & Hakala 2006).

rather than as a distinct social institution (see e.g. Slaughter & Leslie 1997, Currie 2002, Giddens 1995, Gumport & Pusser 1995, Smyth 1995, Rhoades 1998, Blackmore & Sachs 2001, Gumport 2000, Brooks & Mackinnon 2001, Hakala et al. 2003, Nixon 2004).

Managerial forms of governance

Following the doctrines of 'New Public Management' (e.g. Hood 1995, Pollit 1993, Ball 1997) and 'New Higher Education' (Winter 1991), managerial practices have been introduced into universities evoking further pressures for accountability, cost-effectiveness, efficiency and emphases on income-generating activities (e.g. Readings 1996, Jary & Parker 1998, Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a, Räsänen 2005).

Generally, 'managerialism' provides a guide and justification for conduct oriented to efficiency and economy, market responsiveness and the control of employee behavior towards these ends by managers (Hartley 1983, Trowler 2001b). In universities, this has involved a power shift away from bottom heavy, consensual, collegial democracy of rough professional equals towards a keener assertion of top down authority by chancellors, vice-chancellors, senior management teams of academic managers and full-time administrators (Dearlove 1998b, Becher & Kogan 1992). For example, administrative officers shape programs and curricula, standardize and routinize faculty work in a number of ways and ever more often. It is, in fact, not difficult to experience an overt concern by the administration to assert their rights of "management" over the whole of the academic labor process (Halsey 1992, Miller 1991, Smyth 1995, Dearlove 1998b, Räsänen 2005). Accordingly, the university management is also inclined to view the staff as a cost rather than an investment (Churchman 2004).

This reflects a shift from a situation in which many academics had more space to organize much of their "own" daily work towards a situation that is much less tolerant of self-governance[13]. It is argued that due to the growing market-orientation and managerialism, the university has been transformed into a 'McUniversity' (Parker & Jary 1995) and an 'academic assembly line' (see Barry et al. 2001) in which academics are treated as increasingly 'managed professionals' (Rhoades 1998) or 'state-subsidized entrepreneurs' (Slaughter & Leslie 1997).

A rat race

These shifts in organization and control have not been freely chosen by most academics (nor by all academic managers and administrators), but have emerged out of the pressures on universities to change. It is hard to say exactly what is driving these developments or when they first began to take hold. At present, however, higher education seems to be in the middle of a

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[13] In spite of a possible nostalgic yearning here, nostalgia should not be conceived of only as a more or less accurate description of the past but as a morality of the present. The importance of nostalgia lies in its capability to expose current tensions and dilemmas (Ylijoki 2005, p. 574).

discursive transition of values, in which traditional ideals of academic work – autonomy, freedom and critical education – are being adapted to the conditions of the "global market economy". "The market" increasingly permeates and reshapes the everyday language and practices with an emphasis on what can be measured and what has monetary value (Morley 2001, Trowler 2001b). Students are ever more often being redefined as "customers" or "clients" and industry as the number one "stakeholder" of higher education which is accordingly perceived as operating in the competitive "open training markets".

The number and the speed of a number of simultaneous reforms appear to be fuelled by some kind of crisis. The result of this is that a sense of long range planning seems to be lacking (see e.g. Blackmore & Sachs 2001, Churchman 2004, Nixon et al. 2001, Taylor 1999, Tierney 2003). In Dearlove's words "*change on the campus creeps up on the institution, unplanned, and this tends to involve fragmenting an already fragmented base* (1998a, p. 73)." In this rat race, evaluation of individual academics, organizational units, and whole universities are being seen as the central mechanism for monitoring and enhancing the quality of academic work (see Morley 2001). Various "league tables" have been set up and universities are pitched against each other in a spurious search for the "best" one(s). Accordingly, performance and 'performativity' (Lyotard 1984) have become something that is both valued and evaluated. 'Being seen to perform', while responding to the accountability demands of the market forces, is thus considered the sign of "excellence" (cf. MacIntyre 1985). According to Morley (2001), a substantial worry is that when efficiency and effectiveness become the exclusive criteria for judging knowledge and its worth in the university, questions like is it "true", "just", and "morally important" become easily reduced to questions like is it "efficient", "marketable" and "translatable into information quantities?" (Morley 2001, see also Nixon 2001, Nixon 2003, Nixon 2004, MacIntyre 1985)

The neo-liberal transformation of higher education in Finland

These general shifts in the academic environment and the ongoing restructuring of higher education institutions have been documented and analyzed most notably by critical higher education researchers in the UK, Australia and the USA. Based on my studies at our own workplace at HSE, in five other disciplinary units at four Finnish universities, and on discussions about these issues with a number of colleagues and higher education researchers in the field, my understanding is that Finland is no exception with regard to the neo-liberal transformation[14] of

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[14] For neo-liberals the commitment to the free market involves two sets of claims: claims for the efficiency of the market as a superior allocative mechanism for the distribution of scarce public resources and claims for the market as a morally superior form of political economy. Neo-liberalism as a political philosophy involves a return to a primitive form of individualism, an individualism which is 'competitive', 'possessive' and often construed in terms of the doctrine of 'consumer sovereignty'. It involves an emphasis on freedom over equality where freedom is construed in negative (anti-state, anti-bureaucracy) and individualistic terms. Negative freedom is freedom from state interference which implies an acceptance of inequalities generated by the market. (see Peters & Marshall, 1996; ref. in Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education)

higher education. HSE in particular serves here as a clear example of this "development". A few excerpts from the annual report 2004 of HSE illustrate this view:

> "2004 will be remembered as a year when we introduced as many *reforms*, as fast as we could, and sometimes even faster. […] Cutting the former Master's degree program in two was […] a very demanding exercise in educational planning. […] The [new] programs have been planned as multidisciplinary entities according to *demand* and needs by the *business community*, and not as disciplinary programs based on the *supply*. […] The change in thinking is *dramatic*. Study programs will evolve and disappear as the *economic reality* around us changes. Disciplines and subjects […] play a part in varying combinations forming new *educational packages*. […] The HSE Research Network [established in 2004] will support *professional management* of large-scale projects and relations with financiers of research. […] Co-operation with *stakeholders* has improved significantly with the establishment of an eminent Advisory Board comprising representatives of different stakeholders. The Advisory board has elected a member [a corporate representative] for the HSE Board since 2005." (p. 3, Greetings from the rector; *emphasis* added)
>
> The aim of the HSE Research concept is to build closer cooperation between different research projects and increase *efficiency in the use of resources*. The resources of both the Center for the Doctoral Program and the Research Services have been strengthened by adding resources to the units' *management and administration*. (p. 4; *emphasis* added)
>
> "Major areas of development within administration were, for example, the new *salary system*, the guiding *principles of management* and the internal model of *allocating funds*. […] Improving *quality* and taking part in *assessments* has become an established custom. […] The *Partnership Program* and the *sponsoring* of dedicated teaching facilities (classrooms) at HSE continued the successful development of relations between the university and *business life*. […] The number of students has increased and the volume of student exchange has long been among the highest in Finnish universities." (p. 4-5; *emphasis* added)
>
> "*External financing* constituted 37% of the total financing of HSE. In future, its significance in financing the university function will increase further. HSE *Holding Ltd* manages and develops *entrepreneurship* in HSE, it owns JOKO Executive Education *Ltd* and LTT Research *Ltd* and it is a partner in the Helsinki Consulting Group *Ltd*." (p. 8-9, *emphasis* added)

These themes have emerged gradually into the annual reports during the last 10 years. In 1994 a number of ongoing reforms were described without particular haste; study programs were not described as evolving or disappearing according to changing economic realities or the "demand" of business; accounts of a new salary system, quality assessments and accreditation procedures, Partnership Programs, sponsoring of "corporate" classrooms, and a number of companies operating within HSE can be found only in later annual reports.

According to Hakala et al. (2003: 38-40) the higher education system in Finland changed considerably during the 1990s. The rapid growth of the governmental organizations responsible for research funding, more intense competition for funding, the increase in focussed research funding, emphasizing co-operation with the (knowledge) users, increasing international collaboration, and intensifying postgraduate training exemplify a time when the principles of the global market economy permeated Finnish science policy. The evaluation of universities on terms of the market economy began and university tasks were defined according to the needs of the national innovation system. Since the end of the 1980s, the idea of competition also gained strength within public administration, while competition was supposed to improve both the efficiency and the performance of universities (cf. MacIntyre 1985). Accordingly, universities started to be managed with the help of particular "result agreements", and the evaluation of results reached uppermost importance. At the same time, a growing proportion of the research funding entered the sphere of direct competition. Hakala et al. conclude that the Finnish science and higher education policy became result and competition-centred during the 1990s.

Moreover, a deficient number of personnel increased the pressure for efficiency even further, boosted continuous haste and rush, and made it more difficult to organize the teaching and research tasks in a flexible way. The persistent racing after sufficient funding certainly did not ease the workload of the academics engaged in research and teaching. (Hakala et al., p. 93)" On the other hand, Risto Rinne and Hannu Simola (2005: 320) point out that the academics' humble and silent adaptation to a supposed inevitability, an alleged lack of alternatives, and a hegemonic discourse, such as modern neo-liberalism, seems to be an even more serious problem, at least in Finland (see also Aittola & Ylijoki 2005).

In sum: A stunning account of "what is killing us?"

Hence, the critical higher education literature provides plausible answers to the intriguing question I posed in the beginning of this introductory essay: what is it that "*we can't resist*", is nearly "*killing us*" and leaves few other options than to "*conform*"? Building on the basis provided by this literature an obvious answer to the question of *what is killing us?* would be that the managerialistic regime, the 'New Public Management', certainly is killing us – and especially so from the perspective of ordinary academics working in disciplinary units. It is something that is difficult to "*resist*" and it leaves few options other than to "*conform*". This stance was widely shared among the academics involved in our studies and a similar kind of critique within the higher education research literature is indeed abundant.

The managerialistic idea of the imperative need for "better" *management* of the higher education organizations is based on the assumption of a general breakdown of *trust* in the public and non-profit-making sectors. The consequent assumption is that public trust is best regained through systems of *accountability* that support competition and control within these sectors (Nixon 2004). This managerialistic mentality is difficult to *resist* because in the recent years

the non-profit-making sector in general, and universities in particular, have become increasingly dominated by a business language of "cost-efficiency", "value for money", "productivity", "effectiveness", "outcome-delivery", "target-setting" and "auditing". It is difficult to think outside this terminology, and many academics have few options other than to *conform* – to speak its language in order to fulfill the requirements of the internal and external accountability and funding mechanisms that ensure many academics' survival (ibid.).

This language, however, is not just a different way of talking about the practice of pursuing research, teaching and scholarship. It is an exclusive, re-colonializing language representing both an economic rationality and an ideological drift that tries to capture, transform and measure social processes such as *learning* with economic criteria (see MacIntyre 1985). It provides the political system of governance with the means of economic control and 'discipline' (Foucalt 1977, Nixon 2004, Sommerfeld 2002).

Those critics who do not advocate this kind of mentality see the solutions offered by the 'New Public Management' and 'New Higher Education' as part of the problem – not part of the solution – to the changing social conditions in which universities are located (see e.g. Nixon 2003, Nixon 2004, Sommerfeld 2002). In other words, dwelling upon the managerialistic means of external accountability and control does not exactly help academics in their possible search for the 'internal goods' of academic 'practice' (MacIntyre 1985, see also section 3). Rather, due to the penetrating nature of this kind of language, it seems to make it increasingly difficult to attribute any other than economic meanings to academic work.

Reading the HE literature: a resource or a block for social action

Even if this texture of general and structural changes within academia does not have any mechanical or inevitable impact on academic work, it poses new demands and constraints for academics (see e.g. Prichard & Willmott 1997, Trowler 1998, Ylijoki 2003). The frenetic "development" of universities is subject to all aspects of academic work, while more, better, innovative and excellent performances are both aimed at and expected from the faculty by the university management.

From the faculty's perspective, the challenge is that all the tasks and respective activities of academic work compete for the time and energy of the same group of people working in disciplinary units (Kalleberg 2000, Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001). Striving for excellence within one task at a time might be a reasonable challenge, but a change in one task inevitably affects the others as well. Governing the basic tasks and activities as if they were not related makes it hard to accomplish any forms of integration, beyond such usual phrases as offering "research-based teaching" (Räsänen, forthcoming). As long as the whole set of academic tasks is not taken into account, partial perspectives easily add up only to further fragmentation. Consequently, many academics find themselves in a constant struggle of reinterpreting the tasks in which they, perhaps, should take part and invest their efforts.

This awkward situation raises yet further questions: what kind of stories do higher education researchers craft, share, and build their research on? And, what kind of stories of academic work do we, ordinary academics working in university departments and/or disciplinary units, actually find helpful? To me, reviewing the recent higher education literature feels like moving in quicksand (cf. Czarniawska 1997).

Mainstream: academics as "implementation problems"

On the one hand, the mainstream higher education literature reports on new ideas, plans, aims and experiences of how to "improve" and implement the institutional management of the higher education systems, according to the contemporary higher education policies. In this type of literature higher education is perceived as closely intertwined with policy and practice (cf. Kogan 2000, Teichler & Sadlak 2000; Teichler 2003; Ahola & Välimaa 2002), where a "rational" tradition seems to be married to functionalist perspectives of practical management (cf. Välimaa 1995: 24). Journals like *Higher Education in Europe*, *Higher Education Management*, *Higher Education Policy*, *Tertiary Education and Management* are explicitly addressed not only to researchers in the field, but to "*leaders, managers and policy makers*" (see e.g. Higher Education Management and Policy, 17(2): p. 3). The OECD Journal *Higher Education Management and Policy*, as a clear example of the mainstream literature, states that it is

> "*primarily devoted to the needs of those involved with the administration and study of institutional management in higher education. Articles should be concerned, therefore, with issues bearing on the practical working and policy direction of higher education.* […] *Whilst articles devoted to the development of theory for its own sake will normally find a place in other and more academically based journals, theoretical treatments of direct use to practitioners will be considered.*" (ibid., inside back cover)

On the basis of my reading of this type of literature, we, "ordinary" academics working in departments or disciplinary units, are treated here as "implementation problems" of contemporary policies. From this perspective, the ongoing changes in higher education seem to suit, at least the university management quite well. In some disciplinary traditions and cultures, the topical changes may also ease the professional development of certain researchers in exactly the directions they prefer (about the differences between disciplinary cultures see e.g. Välimaa 2005, Ylijoki 1998). In the mainstream, however, contemporary policies are not exactly questioned and this literature offers us a variety of views on how to "*conform*" and thrive within the given, predetermined policy context. From this perspective, most academics also seem to have a desperate need for external motivation, guidance, control, surveillance and evaluation.

Captured by the critical discourse?

On the other hand, the critical higher education literature seems to provide us ever more accounts and evidence of the *"killing"* dimensions of everyday realities in academia. Here, the "liberalizing" reforms (see e.g. Kiianmaa 1999) are criticized as they are perceived as building up pressure to accept profitability, efficiency, and result oriented accountability as the central basis of one's work (Slaughter & Leslie 1997). Moreover, the growing emphasis on 'performance' and 'performativity' is questioned as it relies increasingly on the exploitation of the emotional, intellectual and physical work of academics and their desire to do well, but in ways that many academics find alienating (Morley 2001). Measuring the performance of academics and linking their motivation to concrete rewards suggests that unless they are continually called to account for what they do, they cannot be trusted to do worthwhile work nor to judge what is worthwhile and of high priority, or even to work at all without the promise of specific rewards (see e.g. Morley 2001, Newson & Polster 2001, Mäntylä 2000b). Some critics would even argue that the university to which we once came to work has reached its end and is about to collapse into a bureaucratic enterprise bereft of moral purpose (see e.g. Readings 1996, cf. Delanty 2001).

The response of critical higher education researchers to the challenges of the present-day university is obvious. Instead of advocating views and means on how to "*conform*" they offer more and more thorough critiques of the ongoing changes and reforms. Their critique is grounded on values that many academics and higher education researchers consider the traditional strengths and responsibilities of the university, such as academic autonomy and freedom, critical engagement and dialogue, intellectual curiosity and honesty, scholastic rigor, self-examination, and respect for diversity and divergent values (see e.g. Tierney 2003, Rowland 2001, Nixon 2003, Nixon 2004, Bone & McNay 2006).

Appreciating the wide research and numerous accounts of the institutional malaise within higher education is, of course, important for any researcher in the field. According to the ideals of critical theory, the task of the critical researcher is to explore the limitations and potentials of the organizational systems being investigated. The purpose of such research is to understand the potentials and human limits of existing organizational forms, activities, and theories, and to transcend these limits and realize these potentials (Rosen 1987). In other words, I have to know how the nature of academic work is changing before I can discuss how 'good' or 'bad' the changes in contemporary higher education are (cf. Flyvbjerg 2006). It is also difficult to comprehend what might be good and worth striving for without experiencing and understanding the negative and vice versa. Both stances are mutually informed, dialectical, and in various ways provide solutions for one another (Fineman 2005: 13; Fineman 2006).

However, the more I read, write and hear about the challenges and problems of academia the more they draw my attention to the restricting realities and the more I am captured by this critical discourse (cf. Trowler 2001b). According to the ideals of the Enlightenment, the subject should become self-conscious through reason and rationality, and thereby create pro-

gressive change with the help of 'scientific' knowledge. However, it is my experience that the problem-oriented approaches common in the critical higher education research open only a few alternative perspectives that would help me to find the way to more desired forms of organizing academic work in local contexts (cf. Walker 2001, Räsänen forthcoming, Meriläinen et al. forthcoming). As such, they offer sensitive vocabularies of lack, limitations and deficit within the present-day academia that tend to support the deconstruction of social relationships and contribute more to skepticism, cynicism, infirmity and 'cultural enfeeblement' (Gergen 1994). In other words, the more I struggle with these two types of higher education literature – the mainstream and the critical – the deeper I tend to sink into the quicksand.

Shifting perspective: from reasons for misery to qualities of 'good work'

Reading the different types of higher education literature presented above has not exactly helped me to find firmer ground under my feet. By firmer ground I mean something other than conforming to the various "…zations" and "…isms" presented in the mainstream, or only criticizing and resisting them, as is customary in the critical higher education literature. I am surely not alone in finding it difficult to make sense of my everyday realities nor alone in looking for a coherent account of academic work that would support an experience of doing *good work* within academia. Hence, finding meaning in one's daily work, constructing a sense of a meaningful identity, and maintaining at least some sort of hope within the competitive jungle of short-term employment in academia is no easy task.

Following Nixon et al. (2001: 241) I think, however, that finding meaning in academic work does not entail a choice between only the '*alienation of the ivory tower*' and the '*managerialism of the bureaucratically accountable institution'*, as is so often presented. There are other ways implicit in the practices and traditions of scholastic life whereby academics, students and the communities of which they are a part can work, think and talk together for the common good. It is not some unavoidable "real world", with its laws of economy, competition and war that is blocking us. And, staring at the blocks may not be the best way to move past the blockage. The dynamic moment is elsewhere, in the difficult business of gaining confidence in *our own* energies and capacities (Williams 1983).

Another reason to start looking for alternative perspectives in my research on academic work was the fact that I found it difficult to see what my contribution could be in the stream of critical higher education research. Focusing only on the timely problems, and thus, adding on more of the same - with a Finnish flavor perhaps - did not feel like a particularly original, nourishing or inspiring prospect. During the research process I gradually became more and more inclined to deviate from reproducing and maintaining only gloomy images, problems and deficits in academia.

Managing this shift in thinking, however, does not mean that I would exclude or ignore the critique. Actually, my studies are in many ways based on critical studies and I share the at-

tentiveness and deep skepticism of many critical researchers regarding the moral defensibility and socially divisive patterns in neo-liberal forms of university management (cf. Adler et al., forthcoming). Critical theory is based on the proposition that although we may understand the limits of a theoretical system or organizational structure through critique, the task of a critical researcher is also to actively engage in challenging the limitations and the potentials, i.e. to dismantle and transcend these limits and our own opposing position at the same time (Rosen 1987).

In my research, this challenge involves a shift in perspective and emphasis. This kind of shift parallels, for example, a movement in psychology from a traditional focus on illness, abnormality, and pathology towards a perspective focusing on human strengths, virtues, and narratives that make life worth living (cf. Bernstein 2003, Bochner 2001, see also Fineman 2006,). Hence, my search for alternatives in this thesis is about complementing critical higher education research findings by also looking for answers to questions like: what is the best of what is, how do you find it, how do you cherish, nourish and develop it? (Gergen 2003, Srivastva & Cooperrider 1986) To me, the purpose of this shift is not to make the best of a bad situation, nor to separate positive emotion from the negative. Rather, I am looking for vocabularies with which to speak about experiences of doing "good" academic work (cf. Gardner et al. 2001), to learn from and build on these experiences, and hopefully, also invite other academics to join this kind of discussion (see Winter 1998). Accounts of the local, creative accomplishments of ordinary academics are important and in the long run, such conversations should also provide a counterpoint to managerial and political accounts that tend to depreciate academic work (Räsänen, forthcoming).

In the following section, I will outline the major sources of inspiration and resources that I have employed in making this shift. First, I will outline the sources, and then describe how I/we have built on them in the series of studies in this thesis.

3. NEW SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Participatory (Action) Research

An important source of inspiration and resources in my research comes from the traditions of Action Research (AR) (see e.g. Reason & Bradbury 2001). In particular, the literatures on Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) have provided good ideas, examples and encouragement in efforts to improve and renew the practices of academic work in our local context.

Within the traditions of Action Research, PAR is one of the several approaches that emphasize collaboration and participation in change projects (Reason & Heron 1995). PAR's ideal was originally to serve those who are in oppressed or marginal power positions (e.g. Fals-Borda & Rahman 1991, Freire 1972). PAR practitioners aimed to strengthen oppressed voices, facilitating their participation in social struggles and improving their living conditions. In its Nordic versions, the aim has been to enable multivoiced dialogues among various groups of actors (Gustavsen 1992, Kalleberg 1995, Buhanist et al. 1994, Kuula 1999). In university contexts the main focus of efforts to practice action research and PAR has been on the development of teaching and learning practices (e.g. Zuber-Skerrit 1992). More recent changes in university policies have also inspired work that expands the use of these approaches to other domains, including research cultures (e.g. Ferguson 1999), academic work (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001), gendered practices in academia (Meriläinen 2001), and university development in general (e.g. Weil 1999, Levin & Greenwood 2001).

AR proponents suggest that it is an alternative to the centrally planned changes that are usually implemented top-down by 'university managers' and their consultants. AR is expected to take better account of the abilities and aspirations of the staff. Instead of separating the knower (the 'university management' for example) from the known (the work done by 'ordinary academics' for example), participatory approaches value research with and by those whose realities are being studied. Beside PAR, similar emphases can be found for example in feminist research, cooperative inquiry, appreciative inquiry, and action science (see Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001, Meriläinen 2001).

'Appreciative inquiry' (e.g. Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987), in particular, has been highlighted as an alternative approach to critical and problem-focused social and organizational inquiry. The literature contains many definitions and emphases of AI, and it can be seen as an organizational transformation tool, a theory of organizing, a method to foster innovation, a theory-independent method, a worldview or a paradigm[15] (van der Haar & Hosking 2004: 1024). According to Srivastva and Cooperrider (1986: 686) the AI model is "based on an assumption

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[15] The general AI approach – which ideally involves the whole organization – is often described in terms of an ongoing four-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny). This cycle is organized around an affirmative topic, i.e. something that an organization or a community wants to develop, learn about or enhance in

that *organizing is a miracle* to be understood [and done collectively] rather than a *problem to be solved* [by managers alone]." It seeks to uncover the forces which give organizational life its vitality and self-generative capacity and to contribute to knowledge about organizations-in-action which is appreciative, applicable, provocative and collaborative (ibid.). That is, a central aim of AI is to find out what gives life and energy to people, their work, and their organization. This aim rests on the assumption that organizations develop and change in the direction on which they focus their attention. Thus, the focus in AI is on posing questions and inquiring about "*peak experiences*" that direct attention to the life-giving forces that nourish the best and most valued forms of organizing work. (Cooperrider 1990, Cooperrider & Shrivastva 1987, Ludema et al. 1997)

Despite its seductive promises, my understanding of AI is that it is not to be viewed as an easy, unproblematic fix or key to liberation of (essential human) goodness from its restraining forces (see also Fineman 2006). Positive experiences, learning, and change are tied to negative occurrences and events as well as to positive ones. Hence, focusing exclusively on the positive represents a one-eyed view of the social world. By favoring only positive narratives, AI fails as a technique to value the opportunities for positive change that are possible from negative experiences such as embarrassing events, periods of anger, anxiety, fear, or shame (Fineman 2003). Moreover, when relying only on AI as a research method one may fail to engage with the emotionally ambiguous circumstances of the workplace, for example when individuals feel torn between competing possibilities and differing voices (Fineman 2006: 275). In the quest for meaningful work in academia, however, I ask whether posing positive questions typical of AI alongside critical higher education research might not serve as an additional source for finding fresh perspectives to the question of what keeps us academics alive?

Emotions in organizations

Another important source of inspiration for me has been studies on emotions. In general, emotions have been the subject of much research over many years, but it is only within the past two decades that they have begun to be incorporated into organizational studies (Sturdy 2003, Fineman 2000, 2003). The dominance of rationality in Western masculinist thought, it is suggested, has led to the relative neglect or dismissal of emotions as 'irrational', private, inner sensations tied to women's 'dangerous desires' and 'hysterical bodies' (Williams & Bendelow 1996: 150-151, Sturdy 2003). Accordingly, little more than a decade ago only two relevant books (Hochschild 1983, Fineman 1993) had been published on emotions and organizations (Briner 2004). Since then the field has grown and 'emotion' has gained respectability, prominence and

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their way of going about their work. Furthermore, the four Ds are viewed as a continuous cycle in which it is argued that the Destiny phase leads to new discoveries of community strengths, hence beginning the process anew. (van der Haar & Hosking 2004: 1018-1019).

legitimacy on the agenda of organizational researchers (Fineman 2005). Besides a number of books (see e.g. Fineman 2000, Ashkanasy et al. 2000 & 2002, Fineman 2003), a number of special issues on emotions were published between 1997 and 2002[16].

In the books and articles emotions are studied from many perspectives such as the relationship between emotion and social status or power, emotional labor, emotional intelligence, understanding emotion during times of organizational change, the role of emotion in decision making, emotional reactions to justice and injustice, the gendering of emotion as masculine or feminine in various contexts, the connection between emotion and motivation, the consequences of affect and mood at work, emotional contagion, and the generation of emotions through aesthetics (see e.g. Fineman 2000 & 2003, Ashkanasy et al. 2000 & 2002).

The multiple titles that have appeared on this topic suggest that an understanding of work-life is simply incomplete without the emotional dimension. People's work experiences are embedded in interpersonal interaction and relationships. This means that the emotional toe and impact of these is vital to a coherent understanding of the work experience (Frost et al. 2000). Furthermore, emotion is not something that can be separated from cognition and behavior, work and organizational settings. It is rather a constituent of work and a resource that is used to define work relationships (Fineman 2000).

Following Fineman (1993, 2000, 2003), I would also suggest that emotion is a necessary element in the creation of reliable knowledge – emotion and knowledge are mutually constitutive (also Jaggar 1989). Understanding academic work is no exception. This essay, just like all the articles in this thesis, has been produced through a whole range of emotional dynamics. This includes excitement, inspiration, and hope, as well as feelings of frustration, control and suppression which have been shaping the final form of my/our texts (see also Sturdy 2003: 94). Nevertheless, such reflective 'theorizing from bodies as well as about bodies' (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 3) has been rare in higher education research. Instead, it has been more customary to follow the academic norm of distance while addressing rather impersonal aspects of higher education organizations. At a certain level of abstraction, acts, practices, relations, feelings and cognitions are lost, for example, to the benefit of finding correlations between variables (Sturdy 2003, Alvesson 2003).

Probably the greatest contribution to understanding and 'structuring' emotion has come from feminist and gender studies, where the traditional congruence of rational-emotional, masculine-feminine, mind-body, public-private and powerful-powerless dualisms are typically challenged (see Hochschild 1983, Hochschild 1998, Fineman 1993, Sturdy 2003). In order to understand academic work and organizations better, higher education researchers and scholars have much to accomplish in coming to understand the multiple role of emotions in academia, I think.

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[16] Including journals like Management and Learning (1997, 28:1), European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology (1999, 8:3), Journal of Organizational Behavior (2000, 21:2), Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (1999, vol. 561), Motivation and Emotion (2002, 26:1) and Advances in Developing Human Resources (2002, 4:1).

All organizations, including universities, are emotional arenas where feelings shape events and events shape feelings. The problem is, however, that the multiple disciplines, paradigms, research perspectives, methods and dilemmas in the area of studies of emotions do not provide any one clear or firm set of answers to the understanding of emotion (Rafaeli 2004, Fineman 2005).

In this diverse field of research, emotion is readily recognized as being multidimensional and especially elusive – private, social, cultural, intangible, transient, unmanageable, and even 'unknowable' – a complex that spans disciplinary divides and attention (Sturdy 2003, Wager 1999). It is therefore not easily grasped through a single frame. Emotions are posited as having causal, moderating and mediating roles, as well as serving as outcomes for an assortment of organizational phenomena (Sturdy 2003). In contrast to positivist approaches to emotion that seek out underlying variables and causal factors, interpretivist accounts are more descriptive and processual. They are concerned with knowing emotion as lived experience and seek varying accounts of this. From this perspective, organizations are revealed as both rational and emotional. Such accounts are not only illustrative, but also constitutive of how life is thought about, felt, and presented to others. Hence, interpretivist accounts are to be judged partly on whether they 'bring emotional experiences alive' (Denzin 1990: 86; Sturdy 2003).

Morals and virtues

A third source of inspiration that I found particularly relevant in the later stages of my research was the work of the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. His book *After Virtue* presents both a distinction between two types of 'good' (things) and defines the relationship of these goods to virtues, practices and institutions (Macintyre 1985). This framework helped me in clarifying the point of view that I have gradually been entertaining in the set of studies and writings.

The two kinds of goods MacIntyre distinguishes are the inherent ends of a practice, '*internal goods',* and those pursued "for the sake of something else" (MacIntyre 1964: 8-9), '*external goods*' (MacIntyre 1985: 188-189). Internal goods can be realized, for example, in the form of various kinds of intellectual stimulations. They are generally derivable from the exercise of the virtues in a search for excellence within the context of a particular practice. By contrast, external goods such as prestige, status or money can be achieved in a variety of alternative ways. These are referred to as 'goods of *effectiveness*', as opposed to internal goods which are 'goods of *excellence*' (ibid., 188-189).

There is, then, a tension between these two different types of goods. According to MacIntyre, in the ideal situation these two are mutually reinforcing, but if the good life is to be achieved internal goods should be privileged over external goods. The danger is, however, that the opposite occurs, "*if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant.*" (ibid., 196; Beadle & Moore 2006: 331)

The concept of a '*practice*' links virtues with internal goods (MacIntyre 1985: 191): "*A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods*." He defines practice in terms of the pursuit of 'internal goods' in a specific, complex, and co-operative social activity (Macintyre 1985: 187), and he illustrates this relationship between virtues and practices by reference to examples including football, chess, and architecture. Those who participate in the practice aim at *excellence* according to practice-specific standards. MacIntyre claims that only the members of the community of practitioners can judge to what extent the standards are met in each case, for they only can appreciate the practice-specific *internal goods* (see also Beadle & Moore 2006; Räsänen, forthcoming).

Furthermore, the concept of a *quest* is central in MacIntyre's theory. For him the virtues are clearly not ends in themselves, but means to the end of achieving a good life. Thus, the virtues enable the individual to achieve the goods internal to a practice. The achievement of those goods across a variety of practices and over time is instrumental in the individual's search for and movement towards their own well-being. Within the concept of the *quest* there is the idea that it is a search for something that is not yet "adequately characterized" and that it is only *through the search* that the goal of the quest is to be redefined and understood better (MacIntyre 1985: 218-219; Beadle & Moore 2006: 332).

This brings us to the concept of the unity of a person's life. Here, virtues are linked not only to certain practices. The notion of the '*narrative self*' extends our understanding of virtues. This means that a person's life can be conceived of and evaluated only as a whole, and in the context of the relationships she or he is involved in. This, in turn, requires that we understand the 'story' of that person's life. With the notion of the *narrative quest,* MacIntyre points out that life is lived inside a story in which the individual is the subject, but also in which there are interlocking narratives with others (ibid., 217-218). This is to say that my story began already before I was born and I entered life as part of a continuing narrative. It is only within the context of this continuing and communal narrative that I can make sense of myself and that I can begin to make sense of my *telos* – the good for a human. Thus, the narrative quest – asking where is my story going – is not a quest for the already known, but a quest in which the *telos* will become clearer on the way (Beadle & Moore 2006: 332). Hence,

> "*the virtues are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the goods.*" (MacIntyre 1985: 219)

The notion of '*institution*' that houses the practice brings external goods and organizations in the frame. In MacIntyre's theory, an important aspect in the quest for the good life thus resides within the relationship between the 'internal goods' of the *practice* and the 'external goods' of the

institution that is supporting a specific practice. Namely, every practice requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it, but practices are not to be confused with institutions, because institutions are not primarily concerned with the 'internal goods' of the practice. Institutions are established and maintained to serve the 'external goods'. "*They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards* (ibid. 194)." Although practices are located within and supported by institutional settings, they are concerned with 'internal goods'. These goods "*are indeed the outcome of competition to excel, but it is characteristic of them that their achievement is good for the whole community who participate in the practice*" (ibid., 190).

In my studies, 'practice' refers to conducting research, teaching and scholarship in specific disciplines. From this perspective, academics working in disciplinary units may strive for the 'internal goods' of practicing research, teaching and scholarship. They do this together with their colleagues, students, and relevant others who participate in this work, and rehearse 'virtues' that this form of practice both requires and can cultivate in those engaged in it. The 'institution', on the other hand, refers here to the university, which supports the 'practice' of conducting research, teaching and scholarship. Hence, the relationship between the institution and the practice is intimate and crucial: the practice cannot be sustained without the institution, but pursuing the 'internal goods' of the practice is always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness, competitiveness and corruptive force of the 'external goods' pursued by the institution (ibid.).

Looking at the intimate and complicated relationship between the internal and external goods within academia sheds light, for example, on the substantial issue of on what grounds, perspectives, and morals is academic work being governed or transformed. Following MacIntyre's reasoning[17], if good academic life is to be achieved internal goods should be privileged over external demands. Academic professionals should also know best what are the internal goods and virtues in academic work. Consequently, the university as an institution should not mess with their autonomy in this respect (Räsänen, forthcoming). Sticking to the economic rationality, language, and action typical of the New Public Management regime, for example, therefore represents a substantial drift towards striving for the external goods of *effectiveness*, not towards the quest for the internal goods of *excellence* in practicing research, teaching and scholarship (see section 2).

Staying close to the academics' accounts of their own work, and by focusing on their possible answers to the question of what constitutes academic work as good, meaningful, and worth striving for, opens up the possibility of finding a more or less coherent understanding of

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[17] Institutions form an essential part of MacIntyres 'general theory'. With them one can see why he takes such a critical stance towards capitalist and other bureaucratic organizations which, in his view, fail to provide the kind of conducive environment within which the virtues may flourish and internal goods may be achieved. They have, instead, "won over" the practice that is actually at their core (Beadle & Moore 2006: 333-334), and as MacIntyre argues, the whole idea of management's expertise in controlling social outcomes is a myth. The purpose of this myth is the maintenance of an ideology in which the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative action is obscured in the name of effectiveness (Beadle & Moore 2006: 325).

academic work. This view is based on the perspective of virtue ethics, where "the moral is in the practice" (MacIntyre 1985, Taylor 1989, Hansen 1998; see also Nixon 2001, Korpiaho et al. 2007, Räsänen, forthcoming). From this perspective, the virtues of practicing academic work are approached and derived from '*inside-out'*, from the practice itself rather than from postures conceived from '*outside-in'*, by the institutional *management* and/or other external constituencies more apart from the work itself (cf. Hansen 1998). Even if it is unlikely that academics can easily recognize and consistently pursue specific goods internal to their (fragmented) work, there is at least the **possibility** here that we can move closer to a meaningful, morally sustainable, and autonomous form of work (Räsänen, forthcoming).

Furthermore, if only a few academics are able to establish a recognizable and sustainable practice, many academics may be in the process of building up such a practice. Hence, we also need to be able to appreciate and account for academic practice 'in emergence' (ibid.), as something not yet 'adequately characterized' (MacIntyre 1985) – as incomplete and dispersed stories of "ordinary" academics who work in less extraordinary and coherent ways and possibly in less favorable circumstances (see Räsänen, forthcoming).

Issues in approaching meaningful work

The traditions of action research, studies on emotions, and the tradition of virtue ethics have thus provided me with a wealth of ideas and alternative perspectives in my/our inquiries into how the good and meaningful in academic work can be studied, described and understood.

Respecting diversity at close range?

Originally, I did not start my research process with the idea of applying either PAR or AI in my research on academic work. While working on the first article (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001), however, we came to see closer connections between PAR and our conception of research. Gradually, we started to translate the ideals of PAR into our work and research practice, as a response to the forces that transform and deform universities. We understood action research, and PAR in particular, as an alternative source of ideas and practices for *collaborative and constructive research*, as well as a complementary strategy for the identification and realization of local policies (see Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001). In other words, the traditions of PAR encouraged us to acknowledge and explicitly adopt the stance of a participant in the world we were studying.

This shift in perspective represented a substantial move, for example, from 'writing from a distance' towards 'writing from within' – from the basis of our own experiences, in a local context. In the series of the four studies in this thesis, the first one (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001) was actually an extension of our previous efforts to renew the working practices in our home base alone. In this study we turned our attention to academics working in three different univer-

sity units and engaged in a self-reflective comparison of our own ways of pursuing academic work. In the spirit of PAR we invited the other academics to participate in a joint exploration, to share their views and experiences of pursuing academic work in their own local working units. Our explicit aim was to reflect, discuss, and search for meaningful ways of understanding and respecting the local diversity of academic work, together with the other research participants (Räsänen and Mäntylä 2001).

Dealing with emotions in academic work?

In the second study in the series (Mäntylä 2000b), I turned the focus specifically on the emotions encountered in the present-day university – especially on the particular experience and various meanings of feeling shame in academic work. Building on the previous experiences of pursuing research among colleagues in our own unit, and with academics from the two other units, the direction of the study shifted inward again. By inward I refer now not only to observations and narratives among my colleagues in our home base, but focus particularly on my own lived experiences of both doing academic work and conducting research on it. While focusing on the emotions, I found this move both productive and necessary.

The inward perspective opened up a fertile avenue to explore the subtle differences between a number of different emotions such as guilt, embarrassment, shame, and humiliation, and also the various meanings of feeling shame in this particular context (see Mäntylä 2000b). An inward stance of the closest possible range turned out necessary while studying and writing about emotions in depth. Discussing and speculating about other academics' emotions did not seem like a credible approach. How could I, in the end, know what the others were actually feeling, and particularly, how did they perhaps experience shame in their work? Experiences of shame are both extremely personal and covertly hidden. Building explicitly on my personal experiences and writing mainly in the first person provided me with a possibility to reflect on these elusive and intangible issues in much more detail. Moreover, focusing specifically on emotions in this study also opened up the possibility to see and enrich the understanding of academic work in dimensions other than purely rational, calculable, and managerial ones, as has been typical in organizational studies (Frost et al. 2006).

Integrating multiple time-frames?

In order to reach a better understanding of the overall nature of academic work and its tensions in the present-day universities, the perspective in the third study (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a) was turned outwards again. Here the focus shifted from my own personal feelings into exploring a substantial interview material of 52 Finnish academics' experiences of doing academic work. Focusing now on the academics' accounts of a pervasive "*lack of time*" we, Oili-Helena Ylijoki and I, discerned a variety of time perspectives according to which academics perceive their

work and orient in it. The topic was by no means unfamiliar to our own daily experiences in academia, and our exploration into the temporal orders of academic work created a rather gloomy picture of the everyday realities in academia. In respect to my efforts at looking for good and meaningful academic work, our findings in this study reported on this by negation. In our study this was illustrated by the fact, for example, that 'timeless time' (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a: 62-65), as well as having time to share and spend in discussions with one's colleagues, were perceived as substantial "*goods*" in academic work, even if not accessible in the present. Among our interviewees these goods seemed to belong either to the irreversible past or to the better world hereafter, and not to the present world of hasty, fragmented, and overly managed academic realities (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a, see also MacIntyre 1985).

The moral bases of hope?

Confronted with these kinds of challenges, with my own experiences of working in HSE, and with the abundant critical higher education research literature, I could not stop wondering how academics still found meaning in their daily work. How could the academic units still function amid all the problems, lacks and restrictions that both the interviewed academics and the critical HE researchers reported? At times, frustration, cynicism and despair seemed to encroach from all possible directions – in the empirical material at hand, in the literature, in collegial discussions within disciplinary units, in the future prospects of universities in general, and HSE in particular. Overcoming this anguish and finding inspiration in one's work in an environment that is far from an ideal turned out to be a tougher challenge than I had imagined.

In the fourth study in the series we, Hanna Päiviö and I, set out for an encounter with this challenge (see Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a). Here, we shifted our research somewhat inwards again, and returned back to exploring and searching for the "*good*" in academic work, together with some 20 colleagues working in HSE. Building on a few previous experiments, ideas and studies on good work and Appreciative Inquiry (Korpiaho 2003, Rossi 2003, cf. Karjalainen 2004), we included questions typical of the Discovery and Dream phases (what is the best of what is, and, what might be) into our search for vocabularies of 'hope'. We therefore turned the overt focus of our inquiry from 'descriptions of deficiency' (Ludema et al. 1997) towards characteristics and vocabularies that may constitute academic work as good, meaningful and worth striving for. Now, we asked our research participants to write short stories of "*good experiences and events*" at their work. Our explicit aim in this study was to somehow grasp the elusive issue of hope with the help of the stories we got from our colleagues at HSE.

At the time of the fourth study we did not exactly know what kind of stories we might get from our research participants or where our study would lead us to. We did, however, feel that the direction of the study had to be turned back from negation, that is, from the apparent problems and time constraints, for example, to the 'internal goods' of practicing academic work – whatever they might be (MacIntyre 1985).

Tracing, identifying and grasping hope in the academics' everyday work was - and still is - no easy task. At first sight, hope did not appear as a credible research topic in organizational or higher education studies. Hope and despair have traditionally been studied mainly by philosophers, theologians, and psychologists. Even if hope was characterized in these traditions as a fundamental characteristic of humanness and as an indispensable source of energy for collective action (Ludema et al. 1997, Ludema 2001, Kylmä 1996), we found talking and writing about inspiration and hopes regarding one's work difficult. Just like shame, the topic is both sensitive and private, and paradoxically, trying to grasp it may easily evoke contradictory feelings of suspicion, cynicism, and contempt.

Our study suggests, however, that hope does not deal only with our dreams, utopias, or naïve fantasies. It deals with the different meanings of academic work and sources of inspiration that are so easily lost under the daily grind. And even if the university might never become a paradise, hoping is the space where we create the good in our daily work (cf. hooks 1994). It provides the grounds for engagement in life, whereas despair and the absence of hope may be conceived as the denial of virtue, as moral sloth (Mack 1999), or even as a mortal disease (Kierkegaard 1924). In everyday life hope deals with no less than the meaning of life stretching out into tomorrow and its right to exist on all levels of being (Lindqvist 2004). Given that hope is so vital in our lives, including our work, it is remarkable that it has not gained more attention in organizational or higher education research (Halpin 2003, Lazarus 1999, Ludema et al. 1997, Cooperrider et al. 2000).

Next I will briefly present the four articles of the thesis, and thereafter in section 5 discuss the methods that I/we have followed in the studies.

4. IN SEARCH FOR MEANINGFUL ACADEMIC WORK: Learnings in Four Studies

Three Disciplinary units on PAR

This first article – *Preserving Academic Diversity: promises and uncertainties of PAR as a survival strategy* (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001) – reports on a local initiative of a participatory action research (PAR) project comprising three academic communities[18] in Helsinki.

The bundle of academic tasks

In this project academic work was studied as something that is practiced as a 'bundle of tasks' (Kalleberg 2000) in university departments or disciplinary units. From this perspective, academic work means simultaneous responsibilities in and expectations to contribute to a number of basic university tasks, including 'research work', 'teaching work', 'dissemination of knowledge and participation in public discourse', 'professional services' provided outside the university, and the 'self-governance' of academic work.

Scientific research, resulting in documented and argued claims to knowledge and insight, is often characterized as the most important activity in the bundle. If we did not come up with new knowledge and insight, there would be nothing to teach, study, and to disseminate to others outside of the university, no knowledge of essential importance for us in expert roles, nor any disciplinary structures and processes to govern (Kalleberg 2000, Merton 1973). The aims, processes and end products of *teaching work* and study programs are different from research as they end up, not in articles and publications, but in educated people with different levels of proficiency. From a disciplinary perspective, students study and learn to understand and master knowledge, insights and practices in a discipline. They are also supposed to learn how this discipline is situated in relation to other sciences in society and what kind of expertise this discipline may provide for a profession or an occupation.

While participating in *public discourse and dissemination of knowledge* academics do not primarily interact with their colleagues, nor with students, but with "lay people" with a more general interest in knowledge. The end-results in this type of work are various contributions to public discourses, and thus improved knowledge, literacy and insight for a broader public outside of a particular research specialty and discipline. In *professional or expert services* the end-results are not scientific publications, graduated students, scientific literacy or public enlightenment, but giving advice or engaging in some sort of active intervention regarding various

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[18] The Department of Social Psychology at Helsinki University, The Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership at the Helsinki University of Technology and the Department of Organization and Management at the Helsinki School of Economics.

problems or goals of a particular client or user (Kalleberg 2000). And finally, the *self-governance* of academic work does not result in direct end-products. Work within this task involves creating, maintaining and developing more or less fertile infrastructures for the four basic activities. (ibid.)

Thus, the basic feature of academic work as a 'bundle of tasks' is its multifunctionality. Academic work is therefore amenable to fragmentation of individual work agendas unless academics find ways to prioritize or integrate the diverse activities. Without the privilege of concentrating on only one of the tasks for more than short periods of time, academics working in disciplinary units usually find themselves lost in activities somewhere in between the different tasks that do not necessarily meet any ideals of good work (see Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a; Räsänen, forthcoming). While respecting academic work as a whole, our article offers an opportunity to reflect on how academics may deal in specific, local ways with the various disruptions, contradictions and ambiguities internal to the bundle, and how they try to make the contradictions between the different tasks bearable by combining them in various ways (see Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001).

Dealing with differences

A specific challenge in the approach was to understand the locally diverse every-day realities of practicing academic work in the three units. Particularly challenging was to appreciate and find constructive ways to deal with the diversity of conceptions of "*good work*" in the different disciplinary cultures. Our purpose was not to prescribe how academic work should be done nor to evaluate the work accomplished in the units, but to deal with the difficult topic of differences in values and ideals of academic work in a constructive way (cf. Kalleberg 1995).

By drawing from both our personal experiences and from our comparative understandings of academic work in the three workplaces involved in our study, we developed a tentative and metaphorical description of four possible '*integrative identities*' through which the different academic tasks could meaningfully co-construct and complement one another in our own disciplinary unit (see Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001: 307-308: a *concerned social scientist*, a *multi-skilled business academic*, an *academic specialist*, a *participatory action researcher*).[19] By characterizing the four potential identities by reference to the meaning of the various work activities and to the values that they were supposed to serve, we suggested some potential bases for personal identification. Through these, some of our colleagues could at least try to find their participation in the diverse basic tasks meaningful, including at least research work, teaching work, and expert services outside the university. The idea was to acknowledge that even in a single workplace, colleagues can make the bundle of tasks meaningful in different ways.

By the time of writing the article, the four identities seemed to tell about important

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[19] Later on Keijo Räsänen added a fifth one: 'Feminist researcher' (Räsänen 2005).

aspects of academic life and they helped us in making these aspects discussable both in our local 'community' of Organization and Management and in the other two units as well. Presenting and discussing the imaginative identities in various seminar settings enabled attempts at understanding one's own work as a meaningful whole, discussing the diversity of experiences in being or becoming an academic, and attempts at renewing the local conditions of academic work as well.

Constructive and collaborative research

Our article also offers an opportunity to reflect on the nature of conducting constructive and collaborative research in academic work. Here, we found Ragnvald Kalleberg's (1995) conceptions of sociology and AR especially helpful. In his view, three types of empirical questions or research designs constitute sociology as science: In *constative research designs*, the questions are of the type 'what and how is it', and 'why is it so?'.[20] In *critical research designs*, the typical question is 'how good is it?'[21] Finally, in *constructive research designs*, typical questions are 'how can/could it be', 'how should it be', and 'how could it be constructed in practice?' Here, the challenges lie in developing alternatives to the present situation, in finding out which alternative is both desirable and feasible, and in acting towards realizing the chosen alternative. In other words, constructive research designs aim to achieve a 'transition' or 'transformation' from the existing practices to the alternative practices. (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001: 301-302)

Our conception of the possible research process in the PAR study was further influenced by Kalleberg's (1995: 15) account of the three different sub-forms in constructive research designs. In the first form, '*inspection*', focal practices are compared with other existing practices, or with practices that have existed in the past. The point is to find realized alternatives to the question of 'how can it be?' Through the second form, '*imagination*', it is possible to create further, non-existing, and even utopian alternatives to the question of 'how could it be?' Here the task also includes assessing the desirability and feasibility of all the alternatives by focusing on the question of 'how should it be?' In the third form, '*Interventions*' aim to realize the desirable alternative by finding answers to the question of 'how can it be transformed?' The point here is to try to improve the local practices towards the desirable ones, and thereby learn about the effort at hand. If not before, the additional question 'is the transition worth the pain' becomes relevant at this stage, when the researcher(s) set out to 'change the world' with other actors. Moreover, here the methods of intervention become a central issue and researchers have to study their own action (and motives) as well. (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001: 302, 304-305)

Furthermore, collaboration across disciplinary borders, for example, would be easier if we recognize that work in any of the three research designs is dependent on the results of work

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[20] In another terminology, this design aims to answer descriptive (how) and explanatory (why) questions.
[21] Here, the aim is to evaluate or 'criticize' something on the basis of certain value standards, such as equality or justice, or more fundamentally, search for and identify such standards.

done in the other two designs. Constative knowledge is necessary for critique, that is, we have to know the practices well before we can discuss how 'good' or 'bad' they are. Additionally, we can start constructive work only after sufficient success in the constative and critical tasks. Any attempt to improve practices that we do not know well enough is a waste of time; if not our time, then of the time of the others. We can know what is desirable only if we know what our value base is – that is, if we have done the work of critique. And finally, any work in the constative tasks is always based on certain critical and constructive pre-understandings and skills. In other words, the three modes of research and consequent forms of knowledge are not only important but also interdependent. None of them should, a priori, be placed above the others. (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001: 311)

Being able to act on this view on a reciprocal basis is yet another issue. To us, a major learning from the study was that as a particular form of constructive and collaborative research PAR can be used (successfully) in contexts with which researchers are familiar. We need to know well enough how things are, why they are so, what kind of value-bases or 'moral orders' there are in the particular context. In our case, working with our own department and with the two other, closely related disciplinary units was difficult enough (see section 5). The positive promise of PAR, however, still feels more important than being stuck with the critique, and proving only how fallible policy arguments or managerialistic measures are.

Action Research for change or preservation

The PAR article also offers an opportunity to reflect on the nature of collaborative strategies in the context of university reforms. Adopting 'Participatory Action Research' (see e.g. Wadsworth 1998) as a research strategy in this project turned, eventually, out into a reconsideration of the conventional goals of practicing action research. The article does not suggest that action research offers a general solution for universities and their units (cf. Levin and Greenwood 2001). General solutions like that tend to 'recolonize' academic work into some particular, alien order that does not respect and provide space for the multiple local-cultural realities. Instead, our main concern in the article was with how academics can resist such tendencies, and preserve local diversity.

In contrast to defining AR as systematic attempts to change something and thereby to learn what aids or prevents change (see Kuula 1999), our article demonstrates that PAR can also be applied to resist colonizing and normalizing change. In other words, this would mean that we aim to preserve academic diversity and act against some of the current change trends in universities. Taking such a preservation point of view may teach us to recognize and respect *certain aspects*[22] of local cultures that are not obstacles preventing change, but something

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[22] With the notion of "*certain aspects*" I want to point out that all aspects of local cultures are not to be understood as inevitably good. The traditional university has been relying on an elitist, professor-centered, and hierachical organization dominated by males that I cannot see as aspects worth maintaining (see also Ylijoki 2006, Aittola & Ylijoki 2005).

that is worth maintaining. According to the reasoning presented in the article, this kind of '*cultural diversity*' might deserve respect similar to '*bio-diversity*' in the environmental movement. Hence, the article highlights the importance of problematizing the presupposition that changing academic cultures and practices (towards a unified "right" or best way) is the only alternative to make universities better places for their "original species" (see e.g. Rhoades 2000, Hakala et al. 2003, Ylijoki & Hakala 2006). In this case "species" equates with committed, hardworking academics, who engage with their work willingly, with responsibility, and as best they can in their locally unique and internally diverse disciplinary units (see also Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

Shame as a Constructive Emotion

The second article in the series – *Dealing with Shame at Academic Work - A literary introspection* (Mäntylä 2000b) – highlights another, alternative insight into the characteristics of academic work. Here the focus is turned specifically to the difficult experiences of working in an inconsistent environment where the growing expectations of more, better, innovative and excellent performances are coupled with fierce competition, assessment, evaluation and surveillance (see e.g. Prichard & Willmott 1997, Trowler 1998, Morley 2001). Drawing on psychological, sociological and philosophical research on emotions in this article, I regard shame as a central aspect of these experiences (see Mäntylä 2000b). Consequently, I also see shame as a central aspect of academic work - something that some academics may be quite familiar with, and yet something that is difficult to recognize. It is easily concealed, rejected and not talked about. Not surprisingly, this unwanted emotion has not yet gained too much attention in either higher education research or in research on emotions in work and organizations.

A private guide for socialization

I do not assume that all academics have an obsession with shame, but I think that shame is a considerably more important emotion in academia than most accounts seem to acknowledge. The challenge with this topic is that, in addition to its unpleasant appearance, shame is also an obscure phenomenon that may intrude with academic work in a number of different ways. The most apparent manifestation of this intrusion is to understand shame as an emotion involving either 'internal' or 'external' feelings of disgrace - the negative, restrictive and destructive experiences of being bad, flawed, and more or less worthless (Gilbert 1997, Lewis 1987, Retzinger 1997, Scheff 1988). It is, however, not enough to look at shame only as a negative, individual and internal experience. Shame is also a highly social and organizational emotion that is based on moral positions and judgments. In sociology it is often regarded as an emotion that tends to produce conformity and social order (Barbalet 2001, Scheff 1990). With the help of shame we learn to respect the social forms of our social environment and to gain a sense of shame is

crucial in the ability to regulate social distance (Retzinger 1991, Scheff 2000). In other words, shame directs me in considering other people and other ways of life; it keeps me awake and guides my socialization (see Mäntylä 2000b).

Accordingly, my article on shame deepens the theme of respecting diversity in academic work (see Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001). It demonstrates how taking up the constructive meanings of shame may open up fresh perspectives to the discussion on what constitutes *good work* and what enables academics – not only to cope, adjust, perform and endure – but also to experience one's work as worthy of doing. The challenge is, first, to recognize shame, and then, to see how it may be connected to a number of different behaviors and actions, and how it operates in interpersonal relationships. When acknowledged it can be used to describe phenomena at many different levels, including internal self-experiences, relational episodes, and cultural practices for maintaining honor and prestige (Gilbert 1998).

In my article the challenge of grasping shame is tackled by distinguishing shame from other, related emotions, such as embarrassment, guilt, humiliation, and anxiety. Then, I clarify how 'internal' and 'external shame' differ in cognition and beliefs about the self. The experience of falling into shame is illustrated and analyzed, and thereafter, I discuss how shame can be avoided, concealed or coped with by, for example, resorting to anger, denial, projection, rejection, withdrawal, or by developing oversized ideals. Finally, I take up the constructive meaning of shame, and emphasize the need to encounter it. Along the way I provide the reader with brief vignettes of experiencing shame in academic work (see Mäntylä 2000b).

Inviting contempt?

The article highlights how unacknowledged shame can be understood as one of the forces that tear both our thinking and our relationships apart. Shame is commonly a response to the real or imagined contempt, derision or avoidance of real or imagined others, particularly those whose values are respected (Williams 1993, Ikonen & Rechardt 1993, Sayer 2005). To think and/or act in a manner that someone might only think of as "shameful" is to invite real (or imagined) contempt of real (or imagined) others, including self-contempt. This may be prompted by inaction as well as action, by some sort of lack as well as some kind of wrong-doing. Particularly where the contempt derives from a lack rather than specific acts, shame may be a largely unarticulated feeling existing below the threshold of awareness (Sayer 2005).

Paying thus special attention to shame can be important while working on and/or renewing academic practices and identities within the work place. Academic work organizations can be thought of as 'reputational systems' in which academic achievements build up an individual's reputation and resources are allocated according to her or his reputation (Whitley 1984). Shame does not build our reputation, but various shades of naming and shaming lurk, for example, within the growing emphasis on the assessment and evaluation of academics' 'performance' (see Morley 2001). Working in organizations where a rigid, mostly implicit pressure to think, talk

and perform in the "right" way is customary, couples people with strong ties of shame to prevailing forms, ideas, views, beliefs, norms and ideologies (Turunen 1987, Gibson 1997). A firm and solid form of thinking also provides the actors in an organization with a strong identity and desire to judge, criticize and be "right". Rather than providing space for respecting diversity, this desire usually increases the pressure of both feeling ashamed and violating others.

Reconsidering excellence

The Shame article also demonstrates that the ability to identify, acknowledge, and contain shame, and all the other emotions as well, could be regarded as a professional skill of academics – including those working mainly within the administration and management of the present-day university. We all have a tendency to transfer our painful feelings onto others, and the acts of humiliating others can be considered as a way of projecting one's own shame onto another person. If the work involved in honoring and encountering emotions counted as real work, we would, however, need to reconsider the excessive talk about "competence", "perfection", "top performance", "world-class" and "The University of Excellence" (cf. Readings 1996, Meyerson 2000, MacIntyre 1985).

In the shame literature, the purpose of oversized ideals, oppressive ambition, perfectionist standards, and compulsive maintenance of excellence is understood as an attempt to compensate for potential sources of inferiority and to prevent a direct connection with one's self (see Ikonen & Rechardt 1994, Kohut 1971). To fail to act or live in a way which I do not consider important need not provoke shame. To be treated with contempt by others whose values I do not respect might induce sadness, anger and/or indifference, but it does not necessarily induce shame. The worst kind of disrespect, however, the kind that is most likely to make me feel shame, is that which comes from those whose values and judgments I respect. If my/our understanding of "good" is not regarded as "good enough" by important others an ultimate race for being (among) the best turns easily into an emotional trap of 'shame-rage' (Lewis 1987). The stronger the norm of "excellence" and the stronger the commonality of the espoused values are, the greater are the possibilities of a vicious circle of shame. This vicious circle may appear as demeaning criticism, blame, and hostility towards the other(s) and/or oneself. Instead of pride, content and well-being, this kind of cycle leaves us (academics) often with lonely depression and alienation (see Mäntylä 2000b, Sayer 2005, cf. MacIntyre 1985).

Alternatively, when shame is acknowledged, it may also promote resistance. When faced with conditions that are shaming because they give people few alternatives but to live in ways they do not consider good or acceptable, there is always the possibility to try to reconsider the valuations giving rise to the shame experience. Hence, identifying and calling shame by its right name can be the beginning of understanding this difficult and easily concealed experience. Depending on the situation in which the shame experience surfaces it may lead to a personal re-evaluation of one's work, of the relations with our colleagues, students and administrators, or

maybe of our academic identities and/or (disciplinary) cultures. Shame may also be a sign of a malfunctioning academic practice, or of abrupt changes imposed upon academic work that we ought to rethink and somehow respond to. According to the reasoning in my article, sensitivity towards shame is thus crucial in the ability to regulate social distance, to respect diversity and human imperfection, and to protect a sense of human integrity within academia. It can also be understood as one of the conditions of mobility and creative thinking contributing to adequate, relevant and good work - even though it may be a painful experience.

Time Perspectives in Academic Work

The third article in the series – *Conflicting Time Perspectives in Academic Work* (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a) – offers yet another insight into the experiences and characteristics of academic work. Here the focus was turned from the emotions to the academics' accounts of a persistent lack of time, and consequently, to the temporal structures of academic work. As in the previous articles, the background of this study stemmed from the recent changes in university management and funding. These impose new demands on academic work, including its temporal order, pace and rhythm. Problems with time management also resonate with a large number of empirical studies reporting an accelerating pace of work and lack of time, both in general (e.g. Hochschild 1997, Rutherford 2001, Sennet 1998, Jalas 2006, Valtonen 2004a) and in academic work in particular (e.g. Barry et al. 2001, Kogan et al. 1994, Rhoades 1998). However, the investigations on the temporal implications of the changes within higher education institutions are rare. Hence, we found it important to explore how the recent/ongoing changes impact the temporal features of academic work.

Reconsidering time

Time constitutes one of the principal aspects of human experience and also of social life in organizations such as academia. The temporal orders include explicit schedules, implicit rhythms and cycles of behaviour, and cultural norms about time in organizations (Blount & Janicik 2001). These orders and structures belong to the core of the cultural stock of knowledge according to which members construct their experiences and act in the world of everyday life (Schutz 1970). On the one hand, the socially shared conceptions of time facilitate organizational life by providing individuals with resources to orient themselves and to co-operate with each other while synchronising the activities in the organization (Zucchermaglio & Talamo 2000). On the other hand, the temporal orders also act as external constraints to which individuals have to submit themselves. They repress individuals' experiences and impose discipline and standardized requirements on them (Hassard 1991).

In the logic of management, for example, time is mainly treated as a uniform, unidirec-

tional, absolute, divisible and independently measurable entity (McGrath 1988), which is related to productivity. Efficiency is thus evaluated against the time it takes to accomplish a given amount of work (Bluedorn & Denhardt 1988). Hence, according to the logic of management, time represents a problem of allocation (Hellström & Hellström 2002) and time is almost literally treated as a form of money that can be measured, counted and divided into units (Adam et al. 2002).

Time is, however, not only socially constructed but also physiologically determined. Although the distinction between social time and natural time is far from clear-cut (Adam 1995), it is important to note that there are limits beyond human will to how time can be constructed. Natural time – including birth and death, day and night, sleeping and being awake – moulds the characteristics of social time and shapes our temporal perspectives. Hence, there is not only one time, but a multitude of times according to which individuals organize their experiences, and make sense of their lives. These temporal dimensions are of crucial importance in the way individuals make sense of their work, construct their professional identities, and orient to the past, present and future (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a, Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003b).

Four temporalities in academia

In order to reach a better understanding of the overall nature of academic work and its tensions in present-day universities, our aim in this article was to capture the collectively shared time perspectives according to which academics account for their work. Drawing on interviews with 52 Finnish academics we, Oili-Helena and I, discerned four distinctive time perspectives, which characterize academic work (see section 5). '*Scheduled time*' refers to the accelerating pace of regulated work, '*timeless time*' to transcending time through immersion in work, '*contracted time*' to short-term employment with limited future prospects, and finally, '*personal time*' to the temporality of one's life and the role of work in it (see Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

'*Scheduled time*' means working according to externally imposed and controlled timetables (such as project dead-lines, lecturing hours, administrative meetings) that are often felt as external constraints to which one simply has to adapt. From this perspective, academic work begins to be reminiscent of a survival game amid too many obligations. Our article demonstrates a widely shared view among academics in all positions that due to the increasing pressure of scheduled time – both the accelerating pace and the penetrating nature of it – academics have lost control over their time-management and have less and less autonomy in their work. As an attempt to solve this problem time is treated as a sort of commodity that can be 'bought', 'stolen', 'saved' and 'borrowed' in order to attain and preserve even a little bit of autonomy in work.

In sharp contrast to scheduled time, '*timeless time*' is not subject to external pressures and demands. In the terminology presented in our article, it refers to the internally motivated use of time that involves transcending (clock) time and becoming totally immersed in the task at hand, especially in research work. This kind of time was, however, principally referred to as an ideal, a wish, or an aim, not something really occurring in the academics' everyday practices

– even though timeless time was the fundamental time perspective which provided the basic rationale and personal meaning in academic work for most academics.

The main features of the third time perspective in our study, '*contracted time'*, were a sense of time as something that is terminating, and a considerable uncertainty about one's future. This time perspective is constitutive of questions like "how much time do I have left", and "how/when/where do I get the next contract." In Finnish universities this kind of fixed-period time is the most common form of academic employment; the vast majority of academics are employed on fixed-term contracts.

The article also highlights how this time perspective constitutes several challenges. Being constantly alert to the terminative present and the uncertainty of the future makes long-term planning difficult both on the individual and the unit level. The pressure to demonstrate one's competence in order to secure the next contract turns the present into short-term survival, in which the contract-timers' functioning is constantly under surveillance. To be able to continue with their work, many academics have to apply for just about anything on the academic labour and funding market. Consequently, at the unit level, nobody seems to know exactly who is holding what position and for how long, who will be (t)here during the next semester, and who is in or out of the unit at a given time.

The fourth time perspective, '*personal time',* comes to the fore when academics reflect on their lives as a whole and the role of work in it. The basis of this time perspective is grounded on the inescapable finitude of human existence - in the cycle of birth and death. It raises questions like how to use one's lifetime, how to combine work and other areas of life, and ultimately, how to live a good life (see also MacIntyre 1985). In our study, accounts of personal time appeared mainly in the negative form, as something that was lacking and constantly at risk of being excluded. Several academics described their present situation as living in a "*rat race*" that was very hard to leave. The present pace of academic work was often described as something that is suitable only for those who do not have (young) children, and some said that they have had to 'sacrifice' either their family or their work. Only a few seemed to have found a balance between time devoted to work and other aspects of their lives; the majority struggled with it.

Asynchronous timing

The four time perspectives presented in our article do not, of course, capture all variations and idiosyncrasies in academics' work-related time experiences. The typical work situation of an academic working at the present-day university may, however, be described as being under the pressure caused by scheduled time and the insecurity brought about by contracted time. Academics strive to achieve even snatches of timeless time for academic research as well as to gain some balance in personal time. Further difficulties arise when the rigid, short-term temporal order of (effective) university management is imposed as the norm on highly context-dependent, rhythmic and variable situations of long-term academic work (cf. Adam et al. 2002, also

MacIntyre 1985). At the department and unit levels the academics' every-day realities were, thus, characterized by a continuous reconciliation and struggle between different times, including both the formal, linear-quantitative concept of time (Hassard 1989) and the diverse, conflicting, even chaotic times of daily organizational life.

In our research material the basic tension sprang from the pervasive nature of scheduled time, which led to intense time pressure and often, when not managing to meet all the requirements as well as one hoped for, to feelings of guilt, anxiety and shame (cf. Mäntylä 2000b). This tension was also consistent with a large number of empirical investigations that point to the same trend in academic work: the increase in workload, distress and external control, accompanied by diminishing autonomy, lacking time management, lower social status and salary (see Barry et al. 2001; Fisher, 1994; Kogan et al. 1994; Parker & Jary, 1995; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Räsänen & Mäntylä, 2001; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Smith & Webster, 1997; Trowler, 1998; Ylijoki 2003). The conflicts in temporal perspectives discerned in our study are closely linked to the profound changes that have been taking place over recent years at the macro level of the higher education system. At the departmental and individual levels the change processes have not followed the same speed and pace, thus creating dilemmas between different time perspectives and evoking severe tensions in academic work.

Game over?

All in all, our exploration into the temporal orders of academic work created a rather depressing picture of the everyday realities in academia. The academics seemed to be left with few options available to live a temporally balanced academic life. Conditions like living in 'temporal prisons' (Hochschild 1997), experiencing work as an ever tightening 'time screw' (Salmi 1997) and 'stealing time' (Hochschild 1997) from oneself or one's family are manifestations of the academics' everyday realities, in which the temporal perspectives are seriously asynchronous.

The key question arising from this study, then, was how to develop academic practices so that they would allow a more balanced coexistence between the various temporal orders and, particularly, minimize the negative consequences of both the pervasiveness of scheduled time and the insecurity of contracted time. In the article we raised a number of questions that are acute not only in the university context but represent general concerns in the late-modern world. Namely, is there any sense in becoming deeply attached to one's work and identifying with it if there is a real threat of unemployment in the near future? How can you be hard-working without being hard-driving and competitive? Is self-destructiveness a necessary by-product of productivity? (cf. Levine 1988, Sennett 1998, Eriksen 2001). However, our study of time perspectives brought also up, by negation, insights into what makes academic work a meaningful experience: At best, work is meaningful when one can immerse in timeless time (the work itself), when work serves leading a 'good life', when it is structured by sensible schedules, and when one can continue working on long-term contracts.

Hope and Despair

In the final article republished in this thesis – *Hope and Despair at Academic Work* (Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a) – Hanna and I set out for an encounter with the gloomy prospects of work in the present-day academia by looking for vocabularies of good academic work. Our aim was to somehow grasp the elusive issue of hope from the perspective of researchers and teachers working in a number of disciplinary units at HSE.

Bridging hope and despair

A compelling point of departure for our search for meaning in the daily academic work was provided by Ludema et al. (1997). Following Rorty (1980) they suggest that "*by advancing vocabularies of hope social science may, in some small way, reverse the current trends of academic and cultural cynicism and contribute to a maturing spirit of human hopefulness at the organizational and societal levels*" (ibid., 1017). Based on a broad review and analysis of the hope literature they propose that four enduring qualities of hope contribute to its transformative character in an organizational context: (i) Hope is born in relationship; (ii) It is inspired by the conviction that the future is open and can be influenced; (iii) Hope is sustained through moral dialogue; and (iv) It is generative of positive affect and action.

Regarding hope, however, it is essential that despair is also appreciated because stories about hope and about despair tell about each other (Halpin 2003, Lindqvist 2004). Also, taking the moral virtues of academic work seriously and engaging in continuous debates on what constitutes academic work as *good* may help us to sustain hope in situations where it is under threat and close to vanishing from the scene. Furthermore, being hopeful involves the belief that something good, which does not presently apply to one's own life, or the life of others, could still materialize, and so it may be yearned for as a result. These "*goods*" – be they optimistic illusions, utopias, ideals or memories of the past – constitute important signifiers of people's desires. Their primary function is to distance us from the immediate circumstances so as to develop alternative views that point towards the promotion of the 'good' (Halpin 2003, see also Ylijoki 2005, for a critical view on positive scholarship, see Fineman 2006).

Building on these dimensions of hope in the article, Hanna and I set out to expand our previous research material on academic work with academics' written stories about good experiences and events at their work. Using the method of 'non-active role playing' (Eskola 1988, Eskola 1998) in this study provided us with fresh ideas and accounts of what good academic work could be like from the perspective of some 20 academics working at HSE (see also section 5). While searching for answers to the question of what constitutes academic work as good, meaningful and worth striving for, we identified some central features of good work, demonstrated how good work and hope both feed and create each other. Our study provided thus fresh perspectives to the struggle for meaningful work in an absurd working environment.

Good work: Staying with the academics' own accounts

In the article we did not perceive hope as a character of an individual, a skill or an emotion, but as an elusive phenomenon that arises, grows and is sustained in relationships in which the value and integrity of the persons involved are affirmed (see Ludema et al. 1997, cf. Isaacs 1999). The social nature of academic work, particularly the ability to take part in co-operative and reciprocal tasks, and place oneself in 'service of others' (cf. Lander 2001), stood out as central features of experiencing one's work as meaningful and good. Furthermore, the article highlights how the traditional virtues of academic 'freedom' and 'autonomy' cannot be separated from the communal nature of good work, that is, from the relationships of mutuality. Rather, a general feature that characterizes good academic work would be the dynamic trinity of these three elements (cf. Turunen 1987): good academic work lives in the dialogue of autonomy, partaking and freedom. Accordingly, good work is experienced in a holistic way (cf. MacIntyre 1985), not as a collection of individual tasks, performances, special characteristics or dimensions (cf. Kalleberg 2000, Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001, Räsänen 2005). Ideals that may be attached to traditional characters of individualistic heroes within the academy (Ylijoki 2005, Ylijoki 2002, Ylijoki 2001) are still important determinants of good academic work, but as separate features they do not suffice to sustain hope in the daily work in academia (Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a).

When interpreting *good academic work* from the tension between hope and despair, we constructed an understanding of good work on the conflicting hopes and the fears regarding the academics' future. Here 'the best' and 'the worst' possible determine each other. From this perspective a striking finding in our study was that one of the academics' central hopes was just to continue with one's work, to do it well, and to work on a long-term basis. One would expect that these elements would be self-evident matters of course in any ambitious work, but in relation to the despair within academic work in the present-day academia these appeared, precisely, *as hopes*. In regard to the academics' constant worry over the continuity of their work these can be understood as bold, even radical hopes, which stand in stark contrast with the growing pressures for short-term accountability, flexibility, efficiency and performance (Readings 1996, Jary & Parker 1998, Nixon et al. 2001, Mäntylä 2000b, Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a, MacIntyre 1985).

What makes work meaningful, anyhow

The clash between the academics' hopeful striving for meaningful work and the pressures involved along the growing managerialization of the 'New Higher Education' (Winter 1991) creates working conditions that we refer to as *absurd* in the article. A critical stance towards this absurdity gives rise to questions like 'whose account of the university', 'whose good reasons' or 'whose justice' dominates the contemporary academia, and respectively, whose voices are suppressed or even neglected. Our main point in the article was to respect and provide space for academics' hopes and listen more carefully to the narratives that they told from the heart of

the university. From this perspective we understand hope as mental freedom and an intellectual challenge that may provide us with fresh alternatives in the quest for meaningful and purposeful work in the midst of conflicting traditions, ideals and changes in academia (cf. MacIntyre 1985). Our article exemplifies that without an open, diverse and continuous *moral discussion* about the meaning of academic work the future of higher education may shrink into meagre stories from which the (ordinary) academics' own hopes, experiences, and conceptions of good work are excluded (see also Räsänen, forthcoming).

Looking for and finding the "*enjoyment*", "*privilege*" and "*freedom*" I referred to in the opening excerpt of this introductory essay is, however, possible – even in the "*irrational madness*" of present-day academia. *Staying close to* the academics' own accounts of their present working conditions also confirms that, in fact, we do have alternatives other than choosing only between the old-fashioned 'ivory tower' and the modern 'business university' (cf. Nixon et al. 2001). The dynamic moment (Williams 1983) lies in looking primarily for the internal goods of excellence in academic practice and keeping in mind that the university institution is supposed to serve these (cf. MacIntyre 1985).

5. ON METHODS OF CLOSE-RANGE RESEARCH

At close range: research practices in emergence

Apart from the general description of my research process (see sections 1 and 3) it is difficult to identify any specific beginning of this process. Over the years, the focus of the studies have been evolving as I have adopted and constructed the research methods in each study from the ideas, resources, tools, and material at hand (cf. Kincheloe 2005). The notion of '*close-range research*' did not appear to me until the very late stages of this process, when I was looking for a pertinent title for the thesis. I understand 'close-range' as a parallel notion to 'participatory', 'co-operative', and 'engaged' research (see e.g. Maguire 1987, Reason 1994, Reason 1999, Park 1999, Reason & Bradbury 2001). Along these lines of thought, participatory research has the explicit intention of collectively investigating a reality in order to understand and possibly also transform it in one way or another (cf. Maguire 1987: 3). In other words, participatory research removes the traditional separation between knowing and doing by linking the creation of knowledge about social realities with concrete action (ibid.).

Accordingly, the basis of close-range research in the series of studies at hand lies in participating and being actively engaged in the research subject. This means that I have also engaged other academics in the studies, with whom I have thus been able to explore, share, and compare a rich variety of experiences, observations, and understandings of academic work. A number of persons have been involved in various phases, from different roles and positions, and through a range of activities – as colleagues, research participants, discussants, co-authors of the individual articles, as well as supervisors of research over the years. These people have provided me with questions, ideas, and advice, as well as with reflection, critique, perspective, and insight. They have also provided me with a range of different kinds of research material: joint experiences of the everyday realities, personal accounts, narratives, and memories of academic work, interview statements and transcripts, CVs, and documents regarding academic work in a number of university units.

Rather than following a particular procedure guided by a 'correct' universally applicable methodology, I understand my research as a continuing process of learning, together with these people. A richer understanding, and possibly a brighter future for academic work has also sought at close range with these people and generating '*power with*' the participants involved (in contrast to doing research '*on*' and imposing '*power over*' others).

Hence, my search for good and meaningful work has involved discussions with my colleagues in the MERI group (see section 1), with academics working in the subject unit of Organization and Management, and other units at HSE[23], including the Center for Innovative

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[23] The subject units of Marketing, and Philosophy, for example.

Education. The recurrent conversations have concerned our mundane work in research, teaching, and professional services, and they have taken place, for example, over lunch, at the coffee table, during and after research seminars and administrative meetings. Exploring academic work at close range has also included joint hands-on efforts at renewing the working practices in our home base (see section 1). We have been searching for new ideas and sharing our findings and resources for a number of years, reflected and written about our efforts individually, in pairs, as well as in constellations of several authors (see www.hse.fi/MERI/publications).

Furthermore, asking our research participants for stories, listening to them, and respecting the collegial relationships out of which the stories emerge are important means of conducting close-range research. To me, combining personal engagement with respect for the others involved serves here as a guideline for all of the activities mentioned above. In other words, close-range research is done 'from within' and with other people. It relies on people's participation in the research process, their willingness to share information, personal experiences and views about the issues that have been explored. Hence, it represents a significant deviation from the stance of an "outside expert" doing research 'on' certain research 'objects' with a predetermined social science-based methodology. Instead, close-range research constitutes a paradigm shift in the researcher's understanding of the research as a process involving certain people, struggling with local problems, and working towards local solutions (cf. Park 1999: 141). In contrast to mere collection of data on a pre-described set of questions, I understand close-range research as an attempt to create continuous spaces for dialogue about issues that the research participants find important (cf. Isaacs 1999).

Evolution of Research Motives and Practices in the Series of Studies

Approaching colleagues and strangers in three units: Self-reflective comparisons

The first study (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001) was set up *as an offer* to do Participatory Action Research on academic work with three academic communities in Helsinki. The motivation for this project emerged gradually, under alienating political and managerial pressures that seemed to transform and deform university units in ways that fragmented our work. We had already been studying academic work in our own unit for several years and inviting cooperation from two other university units seemed like a good idea at the time. The thrust and challenge of this strategy was to ask for help from other academics working in our own workplace, in closely related academic communities, and in more distant PAR circles.

The first step in this project was to compare the three disciplinary units and describe the diversity between and within them. Our thought was that the three disciplinary communities should have had good reasons to collaborate with each other. We presumed that our PAR initiative would result in both identifying and preserving local diversity, that is, in finding ways to

bear, sustain, or even resist the normalizing, colonizing, and alienating tendencies that we saw creeping into the everyday realities of academic work.

Our basic method was to proceed carefully, to reflect continuously on our experiences during the process, and to build on our emotions as a source of insight and connection. Starting off with rather traditional and widely used communication practices resulted in interviewing 30 academics[24], who all had wide-ranging experiences of academic work of several years. The interviews covered a blend of themes starting from the personal work history of the interviewee and proceeding to the present working situation. Peculiar to the interview relationships was that both parties – the interviewee and the interviewers – were academics sharing a lot of common knowledge of academic life and its recent changes. Despite the different disciplinary backgrounds, our feeling was that the interviewees regarded us, by and large, as members of the same professional community and were able to understand many of the specific characteristics, requirements, and experiences of academic work. Hopes and doubts emerged towards the study, and the interviewees seemed willing to give accounts of their work, share their experiences, and reflect on their working situation with us (see also Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

At first, collaboration between the different units seemed to be possible, even promising. On the basis of our extensive research material,[25] our intention was to write from an "internal" position as colleagues who were primarily responsible to the members of the three units, rather than to funding, managing, or evaluating bodies. During the project, we were also invited to discuss our findings in internal seminars in all the three units. In the end, however, we were left with a mixed reception of our texts and participatory idea(l)s. If recognizing, describing, and respecting diversity were difficult enough within our own working community, the challenge was even greater when encountering academics from the other two units. Despite our aim, the initial plans for collaborative development work among the three units were never realized. At that time there was simply not enough time and energy to continue the well-prepared project, and our promise of PAR with the three units was not fulfilled to the extent we had planned and hoped for[26].

In spite of the apparent shortcomings in terms of achieving a joint understanding among the three units about what to do together, on the ends to be achieved, and the means to be used to achieve those ends, the project resulted in descriptive findings of the everyday realities of these three academic units (see also Räsänen & Mäntylä 1999, Mäntylä 2000a). In terms of practical knowledge, we succeeded in finding ways to discuss and respect the difficult topic of

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[24] The 30 interviews were carried out by four researchers altogether, including Marja Alestalo-Häyrinen, Karolina Snell, Keijo Räsänen, and Hans Mäntylä. Two interviewers were present at each interview.

[25] Besides the 30 tape-recorded and transcribed interviews the research material was complemented with various documents, texts and informal talks with the research participants, documenting academic work in the respective units. In addition, the authors' 25 and 20 years experience of academic work as students and university employees served here as a strong basis for pursuing participatory research.

[26] As is quite usual for an academic worker, Keijo Räsänen's agenda was changed abruptly, when he was called to chair the subject unit of Organization and Management at HSE.

differences in values and ideals of good academic work in at least two of the units. In our own unit the discussion regarding the bases of differing academic identities is still going on (see e.g. Räsänen et al. 2005, Meriläinen et al., forthcoming). Through our connections with the work-psychologists we also know that our presentations (in their strategy seminars in 1999 and 2000) raised vivid debate about the purposes and meanings of academic work that still keep surfacing, every now and then.

Our intended PAR project also provided the basis for the two subsequent studies in the series on which this thesis is based. Unexpectedly, these inquiries were channeled in two different directions: in the second study I turned inwards and in the third one outwards again.

Turning inwards: a literary introspection

The idea of diving into an autoethnographic in-depth reflection on the various experiences and meanings of shame in academic work (see Mäntylä 2000b) was triggered by a single statement of one experienced researcher among the 30 interviews described above:

> "*Each of us ought to acknowledge that there will be a hell of a hassle in any discussion involving high levels of both expertise and competition… that pressure and fear build up. This is a hell of an issue, that is, that we all are afraid of being exposed.*[27]"

While noticing and paying attention to the simple fact that I was not alone in wrestling with this lurking fear of "*being exposed*", opened up the idea of examining and anchoring my research more clearly on my own experience in academia. Consequently, I did this through a submersion into psychological, sociological and philosophical literature on emotions in general, and shame in particular (see section 3). Using this 'experiential knowledge' (Heron 1992) and linking it with the concepts and theories of shame provided me with a kind of liberating force (see Styhre et al. 2002) – a means for both understanding and breaking with the difficult experiences and issues of doing (not) "good-enough" work. The difficult experiences refer, particularly, to feeling vulnerable, inadequate and unworthy in the midst of an oppressive set of hegemonic expectations in a fiercely competitive academia (see section 2).

In general terms of autoethnographic research (see e.g. Coffey 1999, Ellis & Bochner 2000), this translation and redescription of my experiences involved a process of going back and forth between looking inwards on my own experiences, feelings, and behavior and looking outwards on the social and cultural aspects of working within academia. Linking these two spheres together with the help of the shame literature, and writing deliberately in the first person, provides readers with an opportunity to identify with, reflect and reconsider their own view towards the issues raised in the text.

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[27] I have later translated this interview statement from Finnish into English for the purpose of this text.

Turning outwards: drawing on interview material from six units

The other direction was to turn outwards and broaden our understanding of academic work in the present-day university. Combining interviews from two separate research projects provided Oili-Helena Ylijoki and me with a substantial interview mass of 52 academics working at five Finnish universities. The impetus for combining our research material was our strong initial impression that accounts of a heavy time pressure constituted a prominent and pervasive feature in academic work in general and in our research material in particular. On the basis of our preliminary observations, we wanted to understand better and examine in more detail the nature of this phenomenon that the interviewees, without asking, repeatedly brought forward while accounting for their work. Hence, we ended up questioning what kinds of time perspectives academics seem to live by and how such perspectives relate to one another (see Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a, 2003b). In retrospect, our study with Oili-Helena addressed the question of what does a pervasive *lack of time* tell us about the possibilities of doing good work in the present-day academia?

In our data-driven analysis we first selected all interview extracts that included a temporal reference of any kind. After reading the numerous extracts over and over again, and trying out a number of ways of grouping them, we finally ended up grouping them into four basic categories. While our aim was not to enter into a phenomenological study of individuals' idiosyncratic lived experiences of time, the categories in this paper do not refer to individuals but to different temporal dimensions according to which the interviewees perceived their work. Discerning these categories and naming them as "*scheduled*", "*timeless*", "*contracted*" and "*personal*" time we managed to capture the most distinctive features of the time perspectives in our data, i.e. the collectively shared time perspectives according to which academics account for their work and orient in it.

Like the interviewees, both the authors had worked for years as researchers in academia and the topic was by no means unfamiliar to our daily experiences. Some of the interviews were conducted in the unit I was working in, including my own interview[28], and some of the interviews were made in a university in which Oili-Helena had previously worked. Hence, our study involves aspects of describing working conditions to which we both had "natural access" and with which we were familiar. Using our own experiences and knowledge about academic work was of great help in analyzing, grouping and categorizing our research material, and discussing the reciprocal relationships between the constructed time perspectives. Using research material that was gathered by other researchers from other academic units also helped to create sufficient distance and perspective on the research subject (see Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

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[28] Carried out by Marja Alestalo-Häyrinen and Karoliina Snell.

Returning to colleagues: Generating narratives of hope

In the final study on hope and despair, we approached academic work with Hanna Päiviö from a narrative perspective (see Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a). Following the idea of 'nurturing practices' (Gergen 2003) and building on our previous experiences of 'Appreciative Inquiry,' the focus of our study was directed specifically towards issues, characteristics and vocabularies that may constitute academic work as good, meaningful, and worth striving for. In this quest we drew on 21 academics' short stories of their work that were generated by the method of 'non-active role playing' (see Eskola 1988, Eskola 1998).

We chose this method after reading an array of literature on hope (see e.g. Ludema et al. 1997, Halpin 2003, Lindqvist 2004, Kylmä 1996). With the help of these authors, we based our study on the view that hope is inspired by the conviction that the future is open and becoming, rather than closed or fixed in a deterministic way. The chosen method also enabled us to build on the idea that by cultivating one's *imagination* it is also possible to move beyond the particular constraints that seem to circumscribe life. This stance suggests that hoping is the continuous act of (re)imagining the future that allows transcending the present situation, to integrate disturbing facts with broader perspectives, and to build more creative constructions (cf. Kalleberg 1995).

Accordingly, we presented a short orientation (see Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a: 49) to 24 academics working in different faculty positions and disciplines at HSE, instructed them to enter into the situation described in the orientation, and asked them to write a story about good experiences, events, images and hopes regarding their work, for our research purposes. By using their imagination our research participants were supposed to extend their present situation into the future and reflect back on what (may) have happened before the situation described in the orientation (cf. Eskola 1998).

Through this request, we received 21 written stories from the colleagues that were participating in our study. On the basis of these personal stories, and our own experiences of academic work, we then constructed one narrative on the title "*academic work as a source of inspiration and meaning*". Our focus was not to analyse and categorize the participants' personal stories as such, but rather to combine separate elements of the various stories and reconstruct one narrative that describes academic work as a whole. In terms of narrative research, we made individual elements and phenomena comprehensible by providing a meaningful whole to which they contribute (see Gergen 1994, Hänninen 1999, Ylijoki 2005).

In Kalleberg's (1995) terms of *constructive research designs* (see section 4), our study contained elements of all the three sub-forms and respective research questions that already had influenced our work in the first study on PAR with Keijo Räsänen. While asking our research participants to write about one "*good event or experience*" regarding their work, we were actually looking for accounts to the question of '*how can it be*', that is, what is or was academic work like when experienced as "good"? By transferring the scene of the inquiry (the situation

described in our written orientation) five years into the future, we also opened up the possibility of using one's *imagination*: to transcend the present situation and also to write about possible, not-yet-existing, future images and experiences. However, we did not want to constrain the participants to write only about future images. Hence, we framed the instruction open in this regard. In other words, besides the *inspection* of 'how can it be' we were also looking for answers to the other constructive research question of '*how could it be*'.

In terms of possible *interventions*, i.e. the third form of constructive research designs (Kalleberg 1995), our aim in this study was not to intervene in and impose a particular change on the local practices of our research participants. Our aim at working for a (more) desirable alternative rested on the idea of constructing a new narrative of what *good work* could be like, based on the research material and our own experiences at hand. In terms of narrative research, both the story that we constructed in the article and the whole article as such can thus be read as an attempt to construct an alternative narrative that runs counter to the dominant and hegemonic discourses such as "New Public Management" and "New Higher Education" (see section 2; on the challenges of constructing 'counter narratives' see Bamberg & Andrews 2004).

While analysing the new story on what good academic work could be like with the help of the hope literature, we identified a number of characteristics that stand out as central features of experiencing academic work as meaningful and good. By discussing the meaning of hope and by focussing on the tension between hope and despair in our narrative, we provide the reader with fresh perspectives to the struggle for a meaningful work in an absurd working environment. The point, here, is not to treat our research participants as "implementation problems" of an "improved" institutional management system. Nor are they treated as mere critics of the "killing" dimensions of the contemporary higher education policies (see section 2). The point is to open up possibilities for alternative vocabularies that can support an experience of doing *good work,* help in constructing a coherent account of academic work and a sense of a meaningful identity in academia (cf. also Pesonen 2006).

Relating with methodical traditions – in retrospect

The series of studies and my style of engaging in close-range research can also be characterized and described in terms of several methodical traditions such as particular forms of conducting ethnography, Participatory Action Research, and narrative research.

Combining distinct forms of ethnography

The notion of *ethnography* includes variable periods of fieldwork (observing participation) in which the researcher(s) try to get close to the communities being studied, rely on both interviews and the participants' accounts (less formal talks between researcher(s) and informants),

on observations of a variety of 'naturally occurring events' (Silverman 1985) and other material (e.g. documents, seminar presentations, personal stories), and having an interest in cultural issues (meanings, symbols, cultural artefacts, ideas, assumptions) (Alvesson 2003).

Another, somewhat more specific term, by which I can post-describe[29] my research would be '*self-ethnography*' (Alvesson 2003):

> "*A self-ethnography is a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a "natural access", is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher works and/or lives in the setting and then uses the experiences, knowledge and access to empirical material for research purposes* (ibid. 174)."

Along this line of thought, participation comes first and is only occasionally completed with observation in a research-focused sense. The idea is to utilize the position one is in also for other, sometimes only secondary purposes, i.e. doing research on the setting of which one is a part (see Alvesson 2003, Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

A third label, especially relevant in retrospect to my article on shame (see Mäntylä 2000b) would be '*autoethnography*'. Autoethnography refers to a study where the researcher observes and interprets culture through reflecting on her or his experiences (Coffey 1999, Ellis & Bochner 2000, Richardson 2000, Jago 2002):

> "*Autoethnographies are highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experience, relating the personal to the cultural*" (Richardson 2000, p. 931).

In other words, autoethnographies focus primarily on elaborating the complex relation between 'self' and 'culture' (Valtonen 2004b). If the intention in *self-ethnography* is to draw attention to one's own cultural context, what goes on around oneself, the focus in *autoethnography* is more on the personal experiences of the researcher. There is a strong inward-looking element in this kind of work even though the researchers go back and forth between focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience and looking inward, "*exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move trough, refract, and resist cultural interpretations*" (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739). Hence, the autoethnographic tradition openly works against the ideology of detachment by completely valuing and enchanting the power of *personal* and *closeness* in doing academic research (Richardson 2000, Valtonen 2004b).

Accordingly, I can present my research style as a combination of distinct forms of ethnographies. The emphasis in the field work has been in *self-ethnography* as the disciplinary

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[29] I use the term "post-describe" referring to the challenge of writing this introductory essay with the help of concepts like 'self-ethnography' and 'auto-ethnography' that I was not familiar with at the time of writing the individual articles.

unit of Organization and Management at HSE is my home-base and the main setting of the study. This was complemented with *autoethnography* when my personal experiences were in the focus. In comparison to my autoethnographic inquiry into shame in academic work, for example, my research on the time perspectives with Oili-Helena Ylijoki included more features of a self-ethnography. While more conventional ethnography is basically a matter of a stranger entering a setting and "*breaking in*", trying to create knowledge through understanding the natives from their point of view or their reading of acts, words, and material used, both self- and auto-ethnography are more of a struggle of "*breaking out*" from the taken-for-grantedness of a particular framework or situation. Here knowledge is created through trying to interpret the acts, words and material used by oneself and one's fellow organizational members from a certain distance (Alvesson 2003).

This general problem of mastering closeness/distance, that is, learning the culture and being able to read it so that something of a broader/theoretical interest emerges out of the project, have thus been the specific challenge of my research. On the one hand, the emotional involvement and being immersed in the culture of the workplace I was studying have provided me with essential resources in understanding the phenomenon under study (see Meriläinen 2001, Räsänen 2005, Katila & Meriläinen 2006). Being an insider opens up the opportunity to use internal everyday jargon, draw on my own experience while asking questions and interviewing, to take notice of critical events and their possible meanings within the organization, and so to obtain richer data (Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

On the other hand, as all ethnographies are ambitious in terms of getting and being close to the natives, the risk of "*going native*", i.e. becoming too caught in details and local understandings without being able to say something systematic of wider (theoretical) interest have also, at times, become more than familiar to me during this research process (see Brannick & Coghlan 2007). The disadvantages of being close to the data includes features such as assuming too much in interview situations and not probing as much as an outsider or more detached researcher would do when interviewing from a position of greater distance. As an insider, I may also think that I know the interviewees' answers well enough and not expose my thinking enough to alternative reframing (ibid.)

However, focusing on fascinating and rather exceptional topics in higher education research, as well as close co-operation and co-authoring three of the individual articles have been of great help in the struggle to create sufficient distance and perspective on the lived, mundane reality of academic work. Furthermore, studying not only our own workplace but also two other units in two other universities[30] helped to create sufficient distance. Extending our research material with the transcribed interviews provided by Oili-Helena from an additional three units provided further perspective in my research[31].

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[30] The Department of Social Psychology at the Helsinki University, The Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership at the Helsinki University of Technology.

[31] In terms of disciplinary basis, the set of six units represented the humanities, the social sciences, and

Action Research and many ways of knowing

I continue with this retrospective reflection on my studies in terms of knowledge and knowing that I have found useful in the traditions of Action Research. One of the traditional claims of action research is that it addresses practical issues that are important in people's lives while, simultaneously, making a contribution to knowledge. From this perspective 'knowledge' is not understood as something people possess in their heads, but rather, as something people do together (Gergen 1991). Hence, if we want our research to be truly 'living inquiry', we must consider knowledge as a living, evolving and ongoing process of coming to know, rooted in everyday experience, expressed through stories as well as through concepts, and which supports our daily practice (Heron 1996, Torbert 1991, Reason 1999). To put it briefly, knowledge is here understood as a verb rather than a noun (Reason & Bradbury 2001).

The knowledge that I have sought for while studying academic work through phenomena like diversity, shame, time, hope and despair, rests on the definition of action research as a continuous attempt at *"opening and forming spaces for dialogue about issues that were not previously available or properly attended to"* (Reason 2004: 2-3). As a clarifying articulation of the many ways of knowing involved in my/our studies, I have found John Heron's formulation of a fourfold '*extended epistemology*' (Heron 1992, Heron 1996) useful. Firstly, '*experiential knowing*' is something that comes about through direct face-to-face encounter with a person, a place, or a thing; it is knowing through empathy and resonance, that kind of knowing which is almost impossible to put into words. Secondly, '*presentational knowing*' grows out of experiential knowing, and provides a form of expression of this encounter through stories, narratives, pictures, performances, or other forms of aesthetic imagery. Thirdly, '*propositional knowing*' rests on concepts, ideas and theories that grow out of in-depth examination of experience, telling stories and formulating alternative perspectives, worldviews and beliefs about the world. And fourthly, '*practical knowing*' may be understood as something that consummates the other forms of knowing in action in the world.

The leading thread in an epistemology of this kind is that knowing will be more valid – richer, deeper, more true to life, and more useful – if all these different ways of knowing are congruent with each other and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives (Reason 1991: 211). This kind of knowing "*assert the importance of sensitivity and attunement in the moment of relationship, and of knowing not just as an academic pursuit but also as the everyday practices of acting in relationship and creating meaning in our lives*" (Reason & Bradbury 2001: 9). Hence, the 'extended epistemology' makes sense of the research practices of close-range research. Similar kinds of idea(l)s can also be found in the broader movement of Romanticism[32].

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technology. Half of the units were traditional university departments focusing on both teaching and research, while the other half were more research-oriented units with only few or no teaching duties. Some of the units operated mainly on budget funding while others were heavily dependent on external income (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a).

[32] *Romanticism* evolved in the late 18th century as an ideological movement in response and opposition to

Transforming 'experiential knowing' into 'presentational knowing'

One of the central challenges of the studies in this thesis particularly involves the task of transforming *experiential* knowing into *presentational* knowing – into descriptions, vocabularies and stories that help (ordinary) academics in constructing a coherent account of academic work as a whole, support an experience of doing *good work*, as well as provide a sense of a meaningful identity in academia (cf. Räsänen, forthcoming). Besides building firmly on our many years' experience of pursuing academic work in disciplinary settings, this quest also involves making use of other higher education researcher's texts ('*presentational*' and '*propositional knowing*') while striving towards the practical goal of "*feeling alive*" in academia. Therefore, 'p*ractical knowing*' is understood here as a *goal*, as something that hopefully consummates the other forms of knowing in meaningful and worthwhile action in academia.

'Experiential knowing', however, does not come out just by itself. It is diffuse, vague, fleeting, and only partial by nature. It also often appears in forms that are at first sight difficult to understand and "almost impossible to put into words" (Reason 1999). Consequently, identifying and grasping 'experiential knowledge' entails some sort of digestion, reflection, and cultivation along the research process (cf. Välimaa 2006). Striving for and coming up with reliable knowledge through "empathy and resonance" (Heron 1996) thus involves a number of challenges, limits, and ambiguities (see Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

However, coming to understand the significance and multiple roles of emotion in academic work has been of great help in this arduous task. That is, I see emotion as a significant constituent of academic work and a necessary element in the creation of a coherent understanding of the academic work experience (see section 3). Accordingly, as a participant researcher I regard, observe, scrutinize, and respect my own experiences and emotions as a central and valid part of the research process (see also Katila & Meriläinen 2006). Methodically this means that while entering into the different research situations and relationships I try to engage with the research participants in as many and as appropriate ways as possible. Conducting interviews, for example, is not just a way of collecting stories and information about the research subject. These situations provide the "face-to-face encounter with a person, a place, and/or a thing" out of which the 'experiential knowing' grows and comes about (see Heron 1996). Besides interviews other forms of research relationships that have provided me with these kinds of encounters include long-term working relationships with my colleagues in my home base, attending meetings, seminars, workshops, and informal discussions with the academics in the different

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the cold, mechanical, and unfeeling "reason" of the Enlightenment. Wanting a life of the heart, romantics opposed the Enlightenment's proclivity for categorical division and separation of mind and body, subject and object. Rather than accepting the idea that the external world is fixed and out there to be explored by the human mind, romantics subscribed to a notion of insider, subjective, even intuitive knowledge. As a school of thought romanticism positions an active and engaged human mind as a creative source of emergent knowledge, and thus, rejects the position of objective, detached viewing from the outside. (see Bochner 2001, Wheeler 1993, Jalas 2006)

units, visiting a number of other universities, as well as engaging with an array of texts written by other academics and co-researchers, over and over again. All these situations, activities, and relationships arouse a whole range of emotions that the research can be built on.

Furthermore, during the research process I have constantly been taking field notes on the various encounters with my research subject. These notes include descriptions of the situations and relationships that I/we have been involved in, what has been said and talked about and how, as well as what I felt before, during and after these situations. In some situations I have taken the role of an active participant, putting forward my own ideas, thoughts, suggestions, or critiques on the issues and actions at hand. In other situations I have pulled back and refrained more clearly into a position of a silent observer.

In addition to my rough ideas, thoughts and questions concerning the situations these ethnographic field notes also include my tentative "hunches" about what the others involved have, perhaps, felt and experienced (see e.g. Creswell 1998). This is, of course, something that I cannot know exactly. Nevertheless, I can take notice of what kind of feelings the others' reactions in these situations arouse in me. They are thus not pure guesses, but experiences that can be observed indirectly and also validated later on at least to some extent, simply by checking my understanding and discussing the "hunches" with the participants involved.

Furthermore, I have shared, compared and discussed my personal experiences with my (closest) colleagues during the years. I have also worked on them by writing short 'memos to myself' (cf. Sankaran 1997) about the research episodes at hand. In other words, this kind of descriptive drafting and sketching functions as a research diary (see e.g. Hughes 2000), and serves the purpose of identifying, concretising, and explicating my 'experiential knowing' which, hereby, gradually becomes more and more part of the research material and design.

The next phase in the task towards cultivating and transforming 'experiential knowing' into 'presentational knowing' involves going back and forth between all the research material at hand, my field notes and preliminary drafts on the issues, as well as other researchers' texts concerning the research topic. Gradually, this craft work has come out in research reports and conference papers about the individual research topics (see e.g. Räsänen & Mäntylä 1999, Mäntylä 2000a, Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003c, Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005b). Giving presentations and discussing these texts with other academics, also including a number of the persons that have been involved in the series of studies[33], have helped me to check our understanding, replenish and rethink our research material, (re)focus and refine our writing towards the final articles.

Narrative research

Understanding language, story-telling and active reinterpretation as central elements in knowledge-making also connects my research to the *narrative approach to knowledge*. This is not a

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[33] These discussions include seminar and conference presentations as well as ongoing, informal discussions concerning our draft texts with some of the research participants.

monolithic research tradition but rather a heterogeneous set of diverse approaches and methods applied in various disciplines, including organization studies (Hänninen 1999, Ylijoki 2005).

Within this variety, knowing through narrative is based on the idea that narratives constitute a fundamental form of human understanding through which individuals make sense of themselves and of their lives (MacIntyre 1985, Gergen 1994, Hänninen 1999, Hänninen 2004, Taylor 1989, Ylijoki 2005). We seem to experience the world as sequential, as events over time, like a story with a beginning, middle and an end. Without a plot individual events seem void and senseless. In other words, stories and narratives make individual events and phenomena comprehensible by providing a meaningful whole to which they belong. Stories and narratives impart meaning to experiences by integrating them into a temporal and more or less coherent whole with a specific plot structure (Ylijoki 2005).

In addition to providing a fundamental form of knowing, narratives also embody 'moral orders' (Harre 1983, Ylijoki 1998, Leppälä & Päiviö 2001). They provide us the moral grounds on the basis of which individuals are able to orient themselves in their lives (Hänninen 1999, Rappaport 2000, cf. MacIntyre 1985). Within particular communities narratives also define what is regarded as good, right and valued as opposed to what is understood as bad, wrong and despised (Ylijoki 2005). It is thus of vital importance to pay attention to the kinds of stories about academic work are told, written about, discussed and debated in academia, for example. It is through these stories that academics orient in their daily work and try to get a firm hold in it.

Hence, the nature of the narratives that are told about good academic work can be understood as one of the key elements in individual, social, political, and moral change (see Rappaport 2000, Ylijoki 2005). The question here is not so much whether the narratives we write convey, mirror, or represent exactly the way in which the "social facts" of academic work/life are but rather what our narratives do, what consequences they have, and to what uses they can be put (Bochner 2001: 153-154). Narrative research thus provides a methodological position through which it is possible to engage, not with a presumed neutral 'real' world, but with the complex nuances of the 'lived' world (Rhodes & Brown 2005: 180).

The political nature of the autoethnographic tradition, for example, is quite evident in this respect. It aims at finding new positions, voices, and thoughts that commonly go unnoticed in mainstream studies. Instead of telling celebrated success stories it gives voice to hidden, forbidden, or silenced stories of issues that matter to people but, for some reason or another, remain invisible in academic discourses (Ellis & Bochner 2000, Valtonen 2004b). Hence, telling and writing about my personal experiences of feeling shame, for instance, serves as a good example of finding space for hidden, forbidden, and unnoticed aspects of academic work that matter to at least some academics.

In terms of narrative research the whole series of studies, as well as this introductory essay too, aim at creating and contributing to a vocabulary that provides space for further discussion about issues that have not been properly attended to and has implications for cultural change (see Reason 2004). In line with social constructionist writings (see e.g. van der Haar

& Hosking 2004), the ultimate goal of my studies cannot be a single truth. Hence, it is not so much a question of is it "right" or how things "really" are. Instead, it is a question of whether my writing is plausible and helpful in also inviting other academics to feel less fragmented and colonialized (Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001), unworthy and wretched (Mäntylä 2000b), distracted and compressed (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003), or desperate and hopeless (Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005).

The goal is thus something that Kari Turunen, for example, identifies as reaching for "*insightful mutuality*" ("*kohtaava näkemyksellisyys*" in Finnish, Turunen 1987: 32). By looking for alternative ways of knowing, for issues and stories that call into question taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the "real", the "rational", and the "good" in academic work, we may be able to shift how we treat ourselves, how we attach meaning and purpose to our work, and partly, how we "ordinary" academics are treated in the future (see also Gergen 2003). Even if we are ever more often treated as mere puppets of managerialistic narratives and power relations, it is important to remember that we are not completely free subjects but relatively free agents who are simultaneously products and producers of the prevailing culture (see Hänninen 1999). If we, higher education researchers who study organizations, are to take the lives of other academics seriously and sympathetically – as a means to understand rather than to control, to accept ambiguity rather than to demand certainty, and to engage with lived experience rather than to abstract from it – then the space for the kind of knowledge that I/we have been striving for through the close-range research practices in this thesis needs also to be broadened in the field of higher education research (cf. Rhodes & Brown 2005: 182).

6. CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Contributions

The series of studies in this thesis started out with the simple question of what is this phenomenon called "*just academic work*" and how can it be described, conceptualized and understood in the midst of an array of ongoing changes and reforms in academia? Over the years, the focus of the research developed into an ongoing exploration into the issues of what constitute academic work as "good", and what kind of stories do we, academics and higher education researchers, actually want to craft, share and build our research on? At present, the thesis reports on a continuous effort in searching and accounting for good, meaningful, and morally rewarding ways to work as an ordinary academic, in departments and/or disciplinary units in the present-day university.

As much as this exploration is an ongoing, *self-reflecting inquiry* (Marshall 2001) into these questions, it is also a process of *learning* about becoming and being an academic in Finland, and also about conducting research on the subject. A search like this is not about finding and sitting down to a prepared meal. The purposes of the research will unfold and develop only through the search – by exploring and dealing with the diverse issues, temptations, and incidents that one has to *encounter* during the quest. Hence, when divergent "*goods*" beckon us to different and conflicting directions, we have to choose between a range of competing temptations and demands. Hence, our understanding of the *goods* tends to remain only partial, ambivalent, and emergent.

Enriching accounts of academic work

By taking an interest in local stories, personal accounts, and concrete details of work pursued in a number of Finnish university units, the thesis contributes to the higher education research field by enriching the existing accounts of academic work. Conceptualizing academic work as a particular 'bundle of tasks' (Kalleberg 2000, Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001) serves as the basis for understanding academic work as a *whole* rather than treating it as only a collection of individual and separately manageable tasks. In contrast to higher education research where academic work is studied primarily in terms of research work *or* in terms of teaching work *or* in terms of professional services, academic work is here understood as comprising several distinct, interdependent, *and* intertwined duties and activities, all of which we – "ordinary" academics – are more or less expected to take part in.

Acknowledging and respecting the diversity of local traditions, ideals, and values, as well as the every-day realities of practicing this 'bundle of tasks' in university units points the way towards an understanding of the *diversity* of views of what good academic work may consist of and rest on. An emphasis on appreciating the local particularities also distinguishes the studies

from "mainstream" higher education research where a *best* way to practice academic work is often predetermined and sought on the basis of contemporary higher education policies. Sensitivity towards the *emotional aspects* of academic work distinguishes the studies even further since such research appears to be rare in the field of higher education. Exploring the difficult experiences of feeling inadequate, unworthy and ashamed (Mäntylä 2000b), for example, opens up perspectives and possibilities to reconsider the excessive talk about the standards of the "good", the "right" and the "excellent performance", and the supposed *necessity* and purpose of these standards in academia as well (cf. MacIntyre 1985).

Furthermore, an understanding of the different *time perspectives* of academic work (Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003a) provides another insight into the characteristics of this particular 'bundle of tasks'. My study with Oili-Helena Ylijoki clearly demonstrates that there is not only one time to be controlled, allocated, or managed according to a unified best solution. On the contrary, academics organize their experiences, make sense of their work, construct their professional identities, and orient to the past, present and future according to a multitude of times. Hence, rationalizing or standardizing the academics' use of time in an attempt to gain only external 'goods of efficiency' does not necessarily help academics to do a good job or to pursue internal 'goods of excellence' (cf. MacIntyre 1985). Hence, the prime challenge in organizing and developing academic practices towards a more meaningful whole involves looking for ways that allow a balanced coexistence of the diverse temporal orders. What kind of priorities, schedules, and/or contracts this exactly entails, and how a more "balanced coexistence of different times" can be achieved in different disciplinary units and traditions is a challenge that has to be worked upon as a local possibility. And this task is certainly not restricted to the university management. The solutions must originate with the researchers and teachers who actually do the academic work on a daily basis.

Creating space for dialogues about *hope and despair* in academic work serves as yet another example of finding new perspectives, voices, and thoughts that commonly go unnoticed in mainstream higher education studies (Mäntylä & Päiviö 2005a). Once again, this particular study demonstrates that one can question the hegemonic narrative of 'new public management' by bringing more diversified local stories of ordinary academics alongside this grand narrative (cf. Boje 2001). *All in all, the series of studies contribute to the existing accounts of academic work by studying the special characteristics of this particular kind of work at close range from several different perspectives. Without a versatile understanding and serious discussion of the meaning of these characteristics, the future of higher education (research) runs the risk of shrinking into meager stories, in which the perspectives of ordinary academics tend to become marginalized, if not excluded all together.*

Methods for engaged and constructive research

The close-range research practices employed in the series of studies in this thesis contribute to an open, experimental, and engaged approach. In contrast to the stance that presents the researcher as a disinterested spectator, here the research is pursued through the combination of a number of different practices and traditions. Rather than verifying only factual findings, the thrust of my research lies in looking for insight into the issues of *good work* together with those academics who are involved in academic work on a daily basis. In other words, the research has been carried out through fieldwork in which the researcher works with or lives like those who are being studied (cf. Brannick & Coghlan 2007). The research is also based on the view that the 'good (academic) life' cannot be lived in isolation – the search for the good entails being engaged with, serious about, and vulnerable to matters of both personal and public concern. *The research practices that have been tried out serve here as examples of how to conduct participatory research in higher education.*

The studies exemplify that putting up with this challenge involves not only the possibility of joy and fulfilment. Adopting a participatory and self-reflective research approach also involves patience, persistence, and courage to hold open and continuously explore the boundaries between the research, the work, and the life one is living (cf. Marshall 2001). Hence, being actively engaged in the research subject includes the challenge of encountering ambivalence, pain, and devious feelings of inadequacy during the quest for the good and the more meaningful. It also includes searching for appropriate means for working towards integration of both the positive and the negative aspects of the issues at hand (cf. Fineman 2006).

In terms of methodical practices and styles of writing *the close range research approach in this thesis thus exemplifies an effort where an adequate distance to the research subject is sought for through an eclectic approach that allows movement between shifting positions and perspectives, and favours rich diversity over rigorous consistency* (cf. Adler et al., forthcoming). The benefit of undertaking research in and on one's own work and organization is that it opens up a wealth of insider pre-understanding and knowledge, flexible access, and ongoing experiences to build the research on. The challenge in this kind of close range research is that researchers need to be particularly aware of the strengths and limits of their pre-understanding, their personal involvement, and the possible role conflicts between their roles as an organizational member and a researcher, so that they can use their experiential and theoretical knowledge to reframe their understanding of the situations to which they are close (Brannick & Coghlan 2007).

Ways beyond critique

Regarding the challenges posed in the beginning of this introductory essay the thesis provides a lively ground for the "*groaning, moaning, and conforming*" that so many academics seem to

be occupied and distressed with. As well as providing plausible answers to the question why many academics complain so much, the series of studies may open up even further issues to groan and moan about (see section 2). However, on the basis of our studies I argue that looking only for more or less convincing reasons and/or explanations for the "*irrational madness*" of present-day academia does not necessarily help "ordinary" academics to grasp the "*enjoyment, privilege* and *freedom*" in academic work. Neither does coming up with an ever more convincing critique of the "New Public Management" mentality, for example, free us from this fudge.

The basis for a more sanguine striving in my studies lies in building on the academics' own experiences, their knowledge of, and desire to do a "*good job*". Staying close with and providing sufficient space for the "ordinary" academics' own idea(l)s, hopes and aspirations regarding their work does not result in one, superior solution to the "*irrational madness*". Nonetheless, it does broaden and hopefully also *anchor the moral discussion about the meaning of academic work closer to the every-day realities that academics struggle with in their disciplinary units*. The studies also demonstrate clearly that in fact we do have a diversity of vocabularies, narratives, and knowledge of higher education to choose from and act on. The managerialistic narratives of "New Public Management" or the "New Higher Education" are not absolute necessities, nor the only vocabularies available when talking about the future of academic work.

If we do consider the prevailing neo-liberal market ideology as a particular commitment to the free market as a morally superior form of political economy, we may come to the conclusion that this is only one particular way of thinking about higher education. The purpose, appropriateness, and standing of managerialistic practices in universities can also be contested, at the least. Formulating institutional 'mission statements' through increasingly intrusive 'corporate planning' regimes, for example, may suit the courts on which 'external goods' of various corporate institutions are competed for. They may also be favoured among those academics who are well-suited to the entrepreneurial ethos, especially in business schools. Matters such as creating broad networks, obtaining external funding, advancing results, scoring high points in various rankings, and earning respect in the eyes of external funders and partners are also considered important in many spheres of academia. Nevertheless, most of the academics involved in our studies considered the accelerating intrusion of managerialistic means as *not* the best possible way to embrace the work that resides in universities.

The point in advocating alternative views is not only to criticize the entrepreneurial corporate knowledge-factory idea of the future university. It is also not aimed at cherishing nostalgic memories of the golden past, or at only heating up political strife within higher education. Rather, the point is to provide space for alternative views that point towards the promotion of a diversity of possible "*goods*". As stressed in the research into disciplinary cultures, university does not form a coherent and uniform entity but it entails various 'small worlds' (Clark 1987) inhabited by different 'academic tribes' (Becher 1989) with distinct epistemic traditions, social forms, and moral orders (Ylijoki 2006, Leppälä & Päiviö 2001, Välimaa 1995). In academic work this means that both good work and working communities have different meanings in differing disciplinary

traditions. Hence, the challenge is to look for new bases for good work that are built on the local traditions *and* the changing university environment as well (Aittola & Ylijoki 2005).

This does not mean that we have to uncouple or separate the positive from the negative, and then focus the research exclusively to either one direction (e.g. positive thinking or deconstructive critique). In my studies the possible goods in academic work are sought by working towards the possibility of understanding both of these aspects. The studies on shame and hope serve here as particular examples of this perspective. The difficult experiences of shame shed light on the differing standards of the good and stories about hope tell us as much about the academic despair. The tough challenge here is to hold the seemingly "opposing" poles of positive and negative experiences in constructive tension and focus the research on the dialectical relationship between them in further studies on academic work (see Fineman 2006: 274-275, 281).

Hence, the studies signify an attempt *to overcome negativity*, which is a major challenge of critical studies. The proponents of critical research have been more articulate about what they are against than what they are for (see Adler et al., forthcoming). The studies in this thesis are certainly inspired by this kind of a critical approach. However, the critical sensibility is complemented with a search for alternative ways of knowing by looking for something that may take us beyond mere critique – something that also sustains hope by explicitly addressing the affirmative question of '*what keeps us alive?*'

Implications and further research

Along with a rich diversity of alternative ends and purposes of academic life this thesis argues for a view, where the university is understood not only as a managerialistic enterprise of knowledge production, but as a societal space of learning (see e.g. Nixon 2001, 2003, 2004, Tierney 2003, Rowland 2001, Rhoades 2000). According to this view, people come together and engage in academic work with the prime purpose of *learning*. Here, research, teaching, professional service, and public debate do not just hang instrumentally together; they comprise a particular bundle of tasks, which is both dependent on and helps to sustain a moral framework for doing good academic work (see also Räsänen, forthcoming).

Furthermore, if the 'internal goods' of practicing research, teaching and scholarship are prioritized in a societal space of learning, the prime task of the administration and governance of universities is not only to control, manage, rationalize and standardize the academics' performance according to some predetermined, external criteria. The uppermost task is, rather, to provide space, time, and sufficient support for the academics' initiative and continuous attempts at renewing and developing the tasks, routines and relationships within the academic bundle of tasks. The series of studies in this thesis clearly indicate that coercive measures aimed at motivating academics to perform their own research, teaching, and/or other duties according to

some external standards are not the only alternative to make universities better places for practicing academic work. Academics are both motivated and obliged to make a constant search for the nature of the "goods" in academic work and for ways of realizing these (cf. MacIntyre 1985).

Hence, appreciating and supporting academics' own attempts at *renewing the work from within* may, ultimately, lead to more sustained results than letting academic work be managed, developed and transformed exclusively by (non)academic managers, and/or other more or less tangential bystanders (see also Korpiaho et al., 2007). Academics' resistance towards coercive, normalizing, and colonizing change, on the other hand, may teach us to recognize and respect *certain* aspects of local cultures that are not obstacles preventing any kind of change, but something that is valuable, meaningful, and worth *cultivating* when academic work and universities are being renewed.

The substantial question/issue that the thesis addresses is, thus, a moral one. In terms of MacIntyre (1985) it is a question of identifying the 'internal goods' of academic work and balancing these with the 'external goods' of the institution that is supposed to support the vitality of this practice. To me, this is not only an arduous academic question, without any definite and final answer, but an ongoing trial that keeps academic work alive. Engaging in a continuous exploration of what constitutes academic work as good, in locally diverse settings, is something that helps academics to recognize and cultivate the moral coherence of academic practice. This is something that can be done by academics who take the moral goods of academic work seriously, and through their work continue to learn how to be accurate and sincere, attentive and honest, courageous and compassionate (cf. Nixon 2004: 251).

Besides sustaining hope for a brighter future, what might emerge from these kinds of inquiries is a greater respect for the Other. Even if we do not exactly know where the ship is sailing, a greater respect for other fellow academics, for differing ideals, values and conceptions of the good academic work is certainly something that is needed if the uniqueness of the academic world is to be maintained. Particularly in universities, this respect involves "*an acknowledgement of the deep disagreements which may, ultimately, be the only common ground we share*" (Nixon 2004, 250). What also may emerge from this paradox is something that Jon Nixon calls "*respectful distance*" – something that welds our openness to and recognition of *difference*, while trying to work through the locally diverse and culturally-specific issues of social justice (ibid.). In other words, it is a matter of entertaining an open disunity, and privileging it against the symbolic violence of translating the practice of research, teaching and scholarship primarily into a managerialistic enterprise of knowledge production and merchandise transaction, for example.

On a general level I would thus concur with the claim that practicing respect within a deeply unequal world is a challenge that may and should be strived for within the structure provided by the university, if anywhere. Some even say that this is precisely what academic work in the university exists for (see e.g. Sennett 2003, Nixon 2004, Delanty 2001). Whatever

this "*respectful distance*" means, locally, is a matter of further research. The modest attempt to explicate and put forward the view of the "ordinary" academic in this thesis begs for other "ordinaries" to stand out, explicate and complement my limited perspective on these huge issues. Much further research is also needed about the "goods" in those academics' work who do it mainly within the sphere of administration, governance and management of universities. A better insight into these academics experiences, their knowledge, morals and desire to do a good job would certainly help in seeking to achieve the fine aim of greater respect for the other. Identifying and drawing the lines between the 'moral' and the 'political' in academic work is certainly also an issue that needs further work, reflection and debate in higher education research.

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PART 2: The Articles

Räsänen, K. & Mäntylä, H. (2001) Preserving Academic Diversity: Promises and Uncertainties of PAR as a Survival Strategy. *Organization* 8(2): 299-318.
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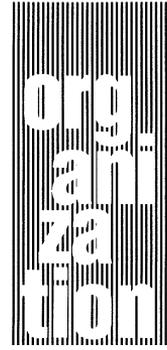
articles

Preserving Academic Diversity: Promises and Uncertainties of PAR as a Survival Strategy

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Abstract. *This paper reports on our local initiative in an ongoing participatory action research (PAR) project with three academic communities in Helsinki. The project offers an opportunity to reflect on the nature of collaborative strategies in the context of university reforms. We critically examine PAR as an ideal and as a practice, and elaborate on its promises and uncertainties.* ***Key words.*** *academic work; collaborative strategy; identity; participatory action research; university change*
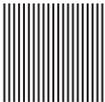
'Collaborative and constructive research' in academic work is a way to learn about alternative futures for particular academic communities and about how to accomplish desirable ones. *For us, engaging in collaborative and constructive research is more promising than withdrawal into isolation, colonization, conversion, or resistance as mere self-defeating critique* (cf. Goffman, 1961). From this perspective, our paper reflects on a specific survival strategy for disciplinary communities in universities. As this strategy clearly differs from government policies or 'university strategies' imposed top-down, several critical scholars have suggested and practised it (e.g. Weil, 1999; Zuber-Skerrit, 1992; Ferguson, 1999). It has especially been favoured among feminist researchers (e.g. Lather, 1991; Maguire, 2001; Gatenby and Humphries, 2000; Katila and Meriläinen, 1999).

We report on our local initiative in an ongoing PAR project with three academic communities in Helsinki. Participatory action research (PAR) is an alternative source of ideas and practices for collaborative and
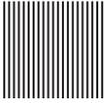
constructive projects (Wadsworth, 1998; Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Whyte, 1991; Freire, 1972). *The motivation for this project emerged gradually, under alienating political and managerial pressures that seemed to fragment our work.* After many years of studying our own workplace, we invited cooperation from two other units. The thrust, and challenge, of this strategy was to ask for help from academics working in our own workplace, in closely related academic communities, and in more distant PAR circles.

As a response to the forces that transform and deform universities, action research (AR), and PAR in particular, can be used in various ways. We see it as a complementary strategy for the identification and realization of local policies. We do not suggest that AR offers a general solution for universities and their units (cf. Levin and Greenwood, 2001). *Any suggestions for general solutions evoke in us the fear that we may be 'recolonized' to US, UK, or other academic orders.* Instead, we are concerned with how academics can resist such tendencies, and preserve local diversity.

This paper is not a confessional story, or an opportunity to blame other academics for their 'resistance to change' (cf. Kuula, 1999). Our PAR project with several communities offers an opportunity to reflect on the nature of collaborative strategies. In this text, we elaborate specifically on PAR's promises and uncertainties. That is, we examine PAR critically as a practice in the context of university reforms.

Translating the Promises of PAR for the Local Context

We did not originally start with the idea of applying PAR to our local context. Over the years, we came to see closer connections between PAR and our conception of research. Thus, this paper can be seen as an attempt to translate the ideals of PAR into a guide for our practice, as well as translating our current research practices into the terms of PAR.

PAR as Collaborative and Constructive research

PAR's ideal was originally to serve those who are in oppressed or marginal power positions (e.g. Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1972). PAR practitioners aimed to strengthen oppressed voices, facilitating their participation in social struggles and improving their living conditions. In its Nordic versions, the aim has been to enable multivoiced dialogues among various groups of actors (Gustavsen, 1992; Kalleberg, 1995; Buhanist et al., 1994).

Along with other western conceptions of knowledge, PAR appeals to the meta-narrative of emancipation (Lyotard, 1984; Humphries, 1997). According to the ideals of the Enlightenment, the subject should become self-conscious through reason and rationality, and thereby create progressive change with the help of 'scientific' knowledge. However, the practitioners of PAR, inspired by critical views on the neutrality of

science, have aimed to serve specific groups rather than to serve humanity in general.

AR and PAR projects are usually defined as systematic attempts to change and to develop knowledge in the context of that change. This modernist disposition to 'change' has recently been questioned by post-structuralist accounts (see, for example, Humphries, 1997). *We cannot avoid asking what the purpose of our interventions in the lives of other academics could be. What is the point of 'changing' their/our cultures and practices, of 'emancipating' them/us?*

PAR is one of several methodologies or disciplinary practices that emphasize collaboration and participation in change projects (Reason and Heron, 1995). Instead of separating the knower (subject) from the known (object), participatory approaches value research with and by those whose realities are being studied. Beside PAR, similar emphases can be found in feminist research, cooperative inquiry, appreciative inquiry and action science, among others.

Our project is inevitably participatory as we also study our own practices in our own disciplinary community. As to collaboration with other communities, a participatory approach seems not only desirable for political and ethical reasons but also practical. Nevertheless, its justification among the academic communities cannot be taken for granted, because this approach differs from usual practices for university development in Finland (Räsänen, 1998c).

The main focus of efforts to practise AR and PAR in university contexts has been on the development of teaching and learning practices (e.g. Zuber-Skerrit, 1992). However, more recent changes in university policies have inspired work that expands the use of these approaches to other domains, including research cultures (e.g. Ferguson, 1999) and university development in general (e.g. Weil, 1999; Levin and Greenwood, 2001). AR proponents suggest that it is an alternative to the centrally planned changes that are usually implemented top-down by 'university managers' and their consultants. AR is expected to take better account of the abilities and aspirations of the staff. Still, AR projects have encountered problems when crossing disciplinary and other boundaries (e.g. academic in contrast to administrative interests) within universities.

AR is often compared with 'traditional academic research'. These comparisons have generated heated debates in various fields, with AR's scientific merit being both questioned and defended (Kuula, 1999; Reason, 1996). *This dualism is problematic for our project: How can we approach other researchers with the PAR approach, while their own conceptions of good research may be quite different? Here we encounter a crucial form of diversity in academic communities, and we cannot avoid dealing with it. The last thing that we would like to provoke is a new 'method strife' among co-researchers.*

Fortunately, the debates have resulted in interesting reinterpretations of social science and research work. We have found Kalleberg's (1995)
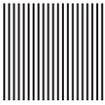
conceptions of sociology and action research especially helpful in this respect. In his view, three types of empirical questions or research designs constitute sociology as science (modified from Kalleberg, 1995: 13): In *constative research designs*, the questions are of the type 'what and how is it?', and 'why is it (so)?'. In another terminology, these designs aim to answer descriptive (how?) and explanatory (why?) questions. In *critical research designs*, the typical question is 'how good is it?'. The aim is to evaluate or 'criticize' something on the basis of certain value standards, for example equality or justice. A major task in these designs is to identify and explicate the value standards for the evaluation. In current organization studies, this task is often accomplished indirectly by demonstrating that a dominant discourse is based on a specific and problematic value standard (i.e. by 'deconstruction').

Finally, in *constructive research designs*, typical questions are 'how could it be?', 'how should it be?', and 'how could it be constructed in practice?'. The challenges here are to develop alternatives to the present situation, to find out which alternative is both desirable and feasible, and to act towards realizing it. In Kalleberg's terms, constructive designs aim to achieve a 'transition' or 'transformation' from the existing practices to the alternative practices. Here *we would like to add the question 'is the transition worth the pain?'. Moreover, when researchers set out to 'change the world' with other actors, the methods of intervention become central foci of attention, and researchers have to study their own action (and motives) as well.*

The Promise: Shedding and Recreating Meanings in Academic Work

The traditions and practices of PAR provide a promising way to shed and recreate meanings in academic work (e.g. Wadsworth, 1998; Reason, 1996; Whitehead, 1989). We have translated these lessons into our local usage. If dissatisfied with current conditions, academics can destabilize their own taken-for-granted conceptions and construct new ones. This possibility opens up crucial questions for academics: Why are we doing this and for whom? Who can and should be involved, and in what ways? What skills could and should we be learning? How could, or should, we identify ourselves?

By answering these questions, one might concretize values such as 'growth of knowledge,' relate them to other values such as 'equality' and 'respect for diversity', and, further, relate them to the hopes and concerns expressed by other groups of people. One could develop new scripts for cooperation and interaction in research work. One could respect and learn a wider spectrum of human and social skills than those typical in the intellectual and 'paper-based' academic culture. One could search for identities through which different academic activities meaningfully co-construct and complement one another—or at least make contradictions between them bearable.

Acting, and not only reflecting, on the new possibilities produces learning experiences. Stepping aside from the previous routines and practices puts them in a new light. Academics can grasp what they have taken for granted once they do not take it for granted any more. Consequently, one can regard particular academic standards as possible worlds, not as necessary worlds. Once academics recognize some of the taken-for-granted values and practices in their own community, they are more ready to respect diversity in other communities. Curiosity may overcome defensiveness and rivals may start to look like potential collaborators.

Uncertainties and Ambiguities

Destabilization of our own practices and conceptions has, however, been an arduous task, laden with contradictions and ambiguities. Destabilizing institutionalized practices feels like moving in quicksand (cf. Czarniawska, 1997). *We would not endure it for long if we did not feel simultaneously that we are about to find firmer ground under our feet.*

Although the reception of the emerging ideas is uncertain outside our 'critical reference group' (Wadsworth, 1998: 8), we find them promising and choose to act on them. Being publicly excited and uncertain can be read as a sign of incompetence, or even taken as a breach of the academic order (cf. Wager, 1999: 4; Kleinman, 1991). Our view is, nevertheless, that this is a problem for the order. Uncertainty and ambiguity are as prevalent in academic life as they are in other organizational cultures (cf. Meyerson, 1991). Being able to alter positions and act in ambivalent situations is a crucial, widely shared competence in organizational life (Hearn, 1998; Meyerson and Scully, 1995). By taking a closer look at our PAR project, we can better explicate the nature of these ambiguities and uncertainties.

Practising PAR with Three Academic Communities

The Setting for Potential Collaboration

The PAR project engages three disciplinary communities: the social psychologists at the Helsinki University (HU), the work psychologists at the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) and the staff of our 'home' department, Organization and Management at the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE). These disciplinary communities work in related fields, each in its own way.

The work psychologists are located socially and geographically close to the centre of Finnish engineering circles, and they have moved towards producing development services for business companies. The social psychologists are close to the core of Finnish social sciences, and they have retained their academic detachment from the economy. Organization and management researchers are linked to business school circles but with a social scientific orientation, and the staff have moved simultaneously to diverse directions such as commissioned research, critical and feminist
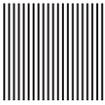
studies, international science, quality teaching, or PAR, to mention some of the most visible efforts.

The three units face similar, although contradictory pressures to change. In the name of international competitiveness, the Finnish government is imposing educational, scientific and innovation policies, expecting academic units to conform to what are considered international 'best practices' (Kiianmaa, 1999). The policies towards 'excellence' are legitimated with certain slogans about 'top universities', characterizing stereotypical images of elite universities in the USA (cf. Häyrinen-Alestalo, 1999). The message, supported through various measures, demands that academics simultaneously 'develop and diffuse innovations' to the business world, improve the 'quality' and 'efficiency' of teaching, and become 'world-class scientists'. *No wonder that our work agendas and priorities have become blurred.*

However, individual academics and disciplinary units respond in varying ways to the imposed changes (Chandler et al., 2000). Many academics feel powerless in the face of these threats to their autonomy, while some others seem to be quite content with the 'liberalizing' reforms. However, the opportunities for local action are not level, for some fields fit the 'best-practice model' better than others. The three disciplinary units involved in our project are in fact located in rather different initial positions, and they have adopted different survival strategies. *We believe that the three disciplinary communities should have good reasons to collaborate with each other, precisely because they are so different and each of them has its own strengths and dilemmas. However, the academics working in the communities may not share this view.*

Constructive and Collaborative Research in Practice

The first step in the project was to compare the three disciplinary units and describe the diversity between and within them. Thereafter, our aim was to collaborate with them in constructive tasks, that is, in jointly utilizing the comparative setting in imagining possibilities and developing action alternatives. Hopefully, these steps would result in the clarification of agendas for action in each community and possibly even to a few joint efforts. In this open process, our interventions provide extra means for interaction, while allowing for each disciplinary unit to define its own agenda. At the time of writing this text, we have reached rather far in the comparative phase of the intended process, and we are about to start the second phase.

Our conception of the possible process was influenced by Kalleberg's (1995: 15) account of three different sub-forms in constructive research designs. The three sub-designs focus on the following questions: How can it be? How could it be? How should it be? How can it be transformed? In the first type, 'inspection', focal practices are compared with other, existing practices, or with practices that existed in the past. The point is

to find realized alternatives ('news from somewhere'). Through 'imagination', it is possible to create further, non-existing and even utopian alternatives, and to assess their desirability and feasibility ('news from nowhere'). 'Interventions' aim to realize the desirable alternative by improving the practices (possibly 'news from here and now'). *Yet, the term 'intervention' also refers to an outsider's active participation in the activities and interactions of a community or organization. Actually, our whole project has been an intervention in many senses and forms* (see Räsänen, 1996).

Our basic working method has been to proceed carefully and reflect continuously on our experiences. *As the possibilities and complications have evoked strong feelings in us, we have recognized and shared them.* We build on emotions as a source of insight and connection (cf. Meyerson, 2000). Although the project with the other units is young, we are 'intimately familiar' (Lofland, 1976) with academic communities after spending 25 and 20 years as university students and employees.

Comparing

While there is obvious overlap in the communities' 'scholarly' knowledge bases, comparisons indicate that they are very different as to their work activities, priorities, calendars, work organization and funding (Räsänen and Mäntylä, 1999; Mäntylä, 2000). In crude terms:

> The social psychologists emphasize 'theoretical' research work and 'research-based teaching'. They attempt to secure time and space for their own research work from teaching and administrative duties. They work mainly alone. The department is financially dependent on the university budget and on the Academy of Finland.

> The work psychologists prioritize work in development projects. Many of them call it 'action research'. Their teaching is partly based on this experience. Most of them spend a lot of time in the field, and in managing their projects. They have built a number of 'teams' that take care of the projects. The laboratory is funded mainly with money flowing from their 'customers'.

> The activity profile of OM is more mixed: academic research, teaching and various externally oriented activities are combined on the agendas of individual researchers. In other respects, too, our own community is in the middle of the two more extreme cases.

However, a closer look at the work of the academics and at their aspirations produces a more complicated picture. In fact, words such as 'research', 'theoretical' and 'practical' have different meanings across the communities.

> Some work psychologists say that their fieldwork in the development projects is 'research', namely 'action research'. Some others say that the projects are used for 'data collection' and for later 'analysis and reporting'. For them, 'research' is a must in university jobs, and it means 'writing' academic papers and publications (in contrast to 'project reports').
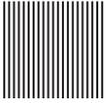
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The social psychologists are less interested in 'practical' affairs with private companies, but some of them work with other actors outside academia. These scholars are politically concerned with the issues of their research (e.g. gender, minorities) or aim to advance the professional status of their field (especially in relation to psychology or social work). In this community, however, 'research' has meant something that is done with and for academic circles.

Many members of the OM community think that they are not as obsessed with the 'practical implications' as many other business school scholars. They produce various kinds of publications, ranging from 'academic articles' to 'project reports' and personal accounts. They do mainly qualitative research in issues that are relevant in academic discourses and simultaneously linked to changes in the business world or to social issues. Beside the keen interest in academic research, they may have expert roles outside the university. Some of them actively seek new conceptions of research and academic practice, and these issues are often discussed in corridors and at lunch tables.

Although it is possible to see the differences across the disciplinary units' overall profiles, they are not internally homogeneous, unified cultures. Also, the term 'community' should be used here with caution, as social relations within the units are ambivalent. Because of the cultural heterogeneity and social ambivalence of the workplaces, cooperation over the fuzzy borders is a sensitive issue.

The setting with the three units turned implicit comparisons to explicit ones, sensitizing the academics to possible similarities and differences. In the interviews, the interviewees reflected on how the interviewers, with their own disciplinary backgrounds, might understand and use the interview statements. Hopes and doubts emerged towards the study, and thereby altered conceptions of the other communities and of one's own community.

In this situation, we feel that it is impossible to follow any standard procedure. We have chosen to start with rather traditional and widely used communication practices, instead of suggesting deviant practices for the sake of change. Further steps in the cooperation need to be planned together with the 'natives' in each department. More generally, the question of what kind of interaction with 'outsiders' is suitable in academic organizations deserves careful attention.

Facilitating Discussion on Diversity in the OM Community

A digression into a particular episode can illustrate our practice and its problems. In this episode, we used the idea of imagined identities as a means of intervention. Our purpose was to deal with internal diversity in a constructive way.

Differences in values and ideals have proved to be a difficult topic for joint discussion in the OandM unit. Attempts at 'communication' have often degenerated into defensiveness (see Katila and Meriläinen, 1999).

We therefore tried to intervene in modes of thinking and modes of exchange in a routine research seminar, and brought in the playful use of metaphors (cf. 'imaginization' in Morgan, 1993).

We developed a tentative and metaphorical description of possible 'integrative identities' (see Figure 1). With the term 'integrative identity', we referred to some bases for personal identification from which academics can find their participation meaningful in diverse basic tasks, including 'research', 'teaching', and 'expert services' outside the university. We drew both from our personal experiences and from our comparative understandings of such identity work in the other two communities.

With the messy lines in the figure, we wanted to illustrate how identity discourses get mixed in a particular community, and that we mostly find ourselves lost in activities that do not meet our (changing) ideals. We complemented the picture with qualifying statements on how we use the concept of 'identity' (cf. Brubaker and Cooper, 2000).

In the seminar, we characterized the four potential identities by reference to the meaning of the various work activities and to the values that they were supposed to serve. These characterizations can be summarized in the following way: The morally concerned *social scientist* combines autonomous, critical research with research-based teaching (cf. Ylijoki, 1998). The *business academic* participates in various kinds of unrelated activities, enjoying them as opportunities to satisfy curiosity and win contests. The *academic specialist* concentrates on a certain recognized sub-field and combines the production of relevant, up-to-date and research-based knowledge with valued teaching activities and externally

Figure 1. Potential 'Integrative Identities' in the OM Community

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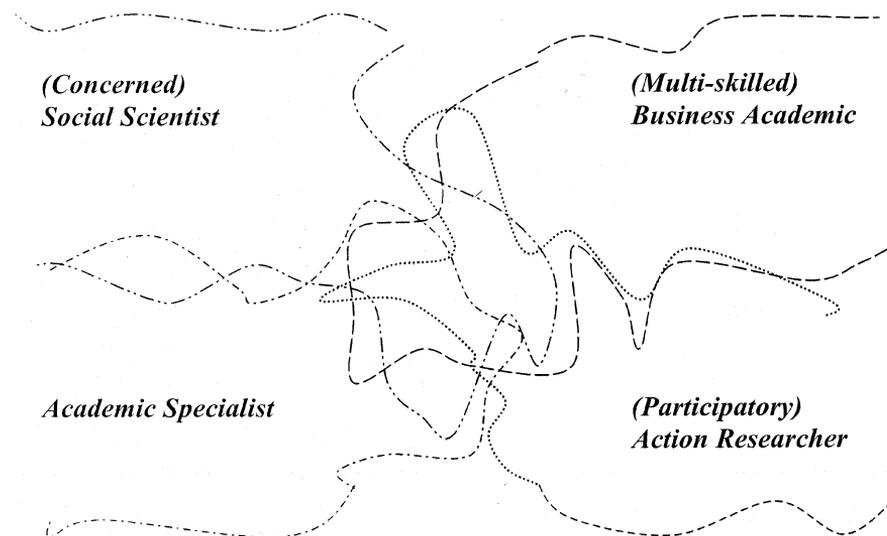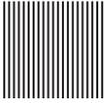
funded projects. The participatory action researcher combines in all activities the moral commitment of a social scientist with the practical skills of a facilitator and change agent.

> When we presented the picture to our colleagues, some of them joined in a lively discussion on how to interpret our own world. They invented new metaphors to express other identities ('teaching machine', 'international top researcher') and to characterize our community (e.g. 'refugee camp', 'summer school'). They found new ways to express their conceptions of their own work and ethics. The tone of the conversation, also after the seminar, was 'constructive' and less defensive than many of our previous encounters. Yet, there was one scholar who said that she could not understand the empirical status of our 'imagined identity' concept. For another, the identities were in a way 'too real' to be outcomes of imagination. A few people sat in silence.

We left the room with mixed feelings. In a way, the 'intervention' had generated a promising discussion, but some of our colleagues did not want to, or could not, participate actively in the process. Our reflections wandered around questions of how colleagues might relate to our action, and about the diverse frames of reflection that they seem to draw on.

Reception of PAR

If recognizing, describing and respecting diversity was difficult enough in a single workplace, in this case our own, the challenge was even greater when we encountered academics from the other units. In general, our offer of PAR has been received in several different ways across disciplinary units.

> The social psychologists have been reserved, as if they were pondering what this AR might be. The work psychologists have taken it as a natural way to proceed, and some of them have started to generate ideas about how we could do it better. They invited us right away to their internal 'strategy seminar'. People in our own department have had mixed attitudes, some expect for a lot from the project, some don't care much about what we are doing, and some others are curious to see what will happen to us (like following a comic strip in a daily paper).

Responses to our writings are indicative of the mixed reception. When we circulated the first texts (e.g. a draft of this article), few of the academics responded with any personal comments. In our home community, people did not easily address the content of the texts regarding academic work, and rather focused on how the study could be done (better).

Our intention has been to write from an 'internal' position, as colleagues who are primarily responsible to the members of the three communities, rather than to funding, managing, or evaluating bodies. We have tried to 'speak only for ourselves', as known participants in the social field. *However, the ideal has been hard to follow, as we are inclined, and also expected, to report 'factual findings' on the units. More*

*than once our fellow academics have asked when we will complete our
'evaluation report', although we have repeatedly said that this is not an
evaluation exercise.*

Some Reflections: Uncertainties in PAR as a Survival Strategy

The PAR approach has certain promising, even exciting features, but both
translating its ideals and trying to practise it have sensitized us to a
number of ambiguities and uncertainties. These may be indicative both of
PAR and of the academic context of application.

PAR in a Business School?

Is PAR a feasible and desirable response in the local business school
context? This question is crucial, for our hope was to find practical and
valuable solutions to the problems of being a business school academic in
Helsinki. The answer is not simple, because the business school context
both motivates and complicates PAR.

Action research generally resonates well with the business school's
moral orders and politics, as AR aims at improvements in practice. AR
offers a way to treat the tension resulting from constant pressure to be
practical. Learning 'actionable' or 'living' knowledge and skills needed in
'development work' is motivating and personally rewarding in itself (cf.
Reason, 1996). Students have also expressed their satisfaction with an
opportunity to learn wanted skills (Mäntylä and Räsänen, 1996; Tiittula
and Mäntylä, 1999; cf. Whitehead, 1989).

However, the complication is that the business school context does not
value critical reflection. Many of the business school academics are
preoccupied with potential winners in global business games, with their
'best practices', and with ways to increase shareholder value. The con-
trast with the original ideals of PAR is stark.

Some forms of AR other than PAR might actually fit business schools
quite well (for a summary of approaches see Elden and Chisholm, 1993).
The social-engineering type of AR seems to be a 'natural' extension to the
current practices (see Kasanen et al., 1993).

The work psychologists at HUT also practise 'action research'. Some of
them have an engineering approach, while others have brought in ideals
from the other streams of AR. In the former, the point is to 'know how'
something can be done. The solution is a tool, be it technical or socio-
technical. It is not difficult to find 'market demand' for such tooling
services, as the business world is otherwise taken for granted. In the latter
orientation, researchers are more concerned about their roles and possible
impacts, and they want to raise these issues inside their community. This
internal discussion is related to approaches chosen by other Finnish AR
communities (Kuula, 1999; Heikkinen and Moilanen, 1999). A point of
comparison is the community of 'developmental work research' at HU
(Engeström, 1987). They want to put the 'tool-making' and the 'tool-use' in
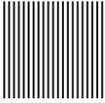
a socio-cultural perspective, and analyse possible contradictions between a tool and other elements in an 'activity system'.

The dilemma in our PAR project is that we work in the borderlands between several academic 'tribes', and these neighbours have different conceptions of AR. Consequently, the problems of translation and justification are not insignificant.

Changing or Preserving Academic Cultures?

AR is usually understood as an attempt to change something and thereby to learn what aids or prevents change, that is, to conceptualize 'mechanisms' (read 'operations of power') that remain invisible in ordinary conditions (cf. Kuula, 1997, 1999). Most AR projects aim at certain practical change objectives. This modernist bias may act against PAR, too. However, we suggest that this is not a necessary feature of PAR.

What if we turned, under the current climate of all-pervading change, the idea of AR back on its feet? We might do PAR to resist change or, more precisely, certain kinds of (colonizing, normalizing) changes. In our project, this would mean that we aim to preserve academic diversity and act against some of the current change trends in universities.

Taking a 'preservation' point of view may teach us to recognize and respect those aspects of local cultures that would be worth maintaining. According to this reasoning, 'cultural diversity' might deserve respect similar to 'bio-diversity' in the environmental movement.

> In the protection of nature, we don't presume that nature should be changed to make it better. Quite the contrary, we interpret most changes in nature as potential signs of destructive human impact. They are seen as demands for corrective action. The object of change initiatives is not 'original' nature (if such a thing ever existed), but the human impacts on it. Quite a lot of effort is actually invested in restoring particular affected areas, waters and species to their previous state. For example, in Finland, various local movements, as well as state and community organizations, now work (rather late) towards revitalization of rivers. The goal is to make the rivers livable places for their original species of fish, such as trout and salmon. A fisherman or fisherwoman is obliged to be careful in distinguishing between a migrating trout and the one that lives all its life in a small river. Poaching on par is strictly forbidden.

With this analogy, we want to focus attention on the possible dangers of AR projects in universities. The projects may, unintentionally, accelerate normalization. Therefore, it is important to problematize the presupposition that changing academic cultures is the only purpose of PAR projects. The projects may also recognize, respect, describe and preserve academic diversity.

We necessarily come to the following basic question: what is improvement, and what is not? Instead of proposing a general answer to this question, we opt for an approach that favours the local construction of desirable and feasible alternatives. With this approach, diversity is more
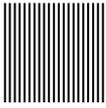
likely to be preserved than destroyed. A host of possibilities open up between the extremes of sticking to the institutionalized practices and promoting any change as a value in itself.

Appreciating Diversity in Conceptions of Research?

PAR can also be a colonizing practice (e.g. Ferguson, 1998), and there is the concrete danger that we may be unintentionally imposing such a practice on our own local cultures. This possibility causes uncertainty among the 'academic tribes' (Ylijoki, 1998), and thus we should be able to appreciate their specific conceptions of research practice. We can elaborate on the nature of this uncertainty with the help of Kalleberg's (1995) distinctions between constative, critical and constructive research.

Cooperation across disciplinary borders would be easier if we recognized that work in any mode is dependent on the results of work done in the other two modes. Constative knowledge is necessary for critique, proper. We have to know the practices well before we can discuss how 'good' or 'bad' they are (or deconstruct them). And, further, only after sufficient success in the constative and critical tasks can we start constructive work. Any attempt to improve practices that we do not know well enough is a waste of time; if not of our time, then of the time of the others. We can know what is desirable only if we know what our value base is—that is, if we have done the work of critique. And, finally, any work in the constative tasks is based in any case on certain critical and constructive pre-understandings and skills.

Figure 2 illustrates this view: the three modes of research and consequent forms of knowledge are not only important but also interdependent. None of them should, a priori, be placed above the others. Still, being able to act on this view in concrete interaction and cooperation is another issue.

Another way of recognizing the interdependencies is to look at the unintended 'impacts' of a particular design, e.g. constructive (or critical) meanings of a descriptive and explanatory study. As all research work

Figure 2. Three Interdependent Types of Research Designs
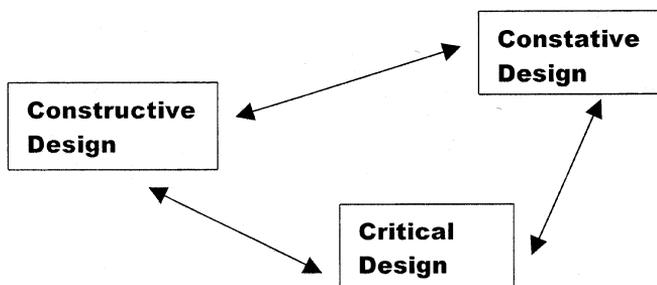
Source Based on Kalleberg (1995: 13).

takes part in the 'social construction of reality', we need to ask what a description or an explanation *does*. In this respect, the specific logic in constructive research is to 'do it' on purpose and reflexively. The way we do it makes a difference.

We can draw one major conclusion from the foregoing reasoning; PAR can be used in contexts with which researchers are familiar. They need to know well enough how things are and why they are so. Moreover, they have to be able to differentiate among various value-bases or 'moral orders' in the particular context. In our case, working with our own department and with the two other, closely related disciplinary units is difficult enough. Thus, if we went to practise PAR in more distant contexts and cultures, we would probably become guilty of the same superficiality of which many AR projects have been accused (Kalleberg, 1995; Kuula, 1999). More generally, both AR projects, and PAR projects often fail because the two other necessary tasks, the constative and the critical, are not performed well enough.

However, the positive promise of PAR feels more important than the dangers of superficiality (cf. Ludema et al., 1997). With the help of this promise, we can avoid being stuck with proving, in the deconstructive mode, how fallible policy arguments or managerial measures are. Critical research is, nevertheless, important, as it keeps reminding us that any form of knowledge is a particular and limited way of thinking, based on specific practices of power (e.g. Foucault, 1980; Dachler, 1999). This point also concerns our emerging practice of PAR with the academics.

Do Academics Really Need and Deserve PAR?

Those who know the roots and ideals of PAR may ask whether academic communities deserve and need it. PAR originated in work done with less privileged actors, while academics are often seen as an elite group. Is it justifiable to help academics in maintaining their privileges?

Here, we enter the terrain of contextual judgements and relative assessments. We have to rely on our knowledge of academia, and draw on the outcomes of our critical inquiries (Räsänen, 1996; 1998a; 1998b; 1998c). *We cannot but believe that (at least some) academic cultures are worthy of PAR. Somebody else might draw different conclusions.*

Academics are not among the most 'oppressed' people in the world. But, in relative terms, their position is not necessarily as good as we might want it to be in relation to impending pressures. In fact, academics currently experience various limitations on their autonomy. The increased use of temporary assignments, new funding arrangements that demand promises of 'top science' and 'practical relevance', externally defined 'quality' standards, cuts in state funding for basic operations, lower salaries in relative terms, expanded work loads, and other similar developments make an academic vulnerable to external pressures. Or

they might do so, depending on the local contexts and on the responses of the academic communities and universities.

One might argue that the privileged academic communities are able to speak and act for themselves. However, is this really the case? The policies have been formally implemented in spite of some resistance here and there. Inside universities, most scholars have silently accepted the reforms, perhaps due to the power of the managerialist and market rhetoric. There are only islands of resistance in which academics have managed to maintain their voice and local values (Chandler et al., 2000).

If we took seriously certain critical views stressing the central role of science in western civilization as a whole, we might need to take back our conclusion that academics deserve PAR. However, it is rather dubious for us local actors to think that all western variants of academic work and mentality are 'essentially' similar (cf., for example, Jary and Parker, 1998: Chap. 3; Whitley, 1984; Becher, 1989).

It is another question, whether academics in the three communities feel that they need collaborative research with their neighbours. As the mixed response to our project suggests, they do not all agree with this view. Politically it may be risky to trust outsiders, especially under the current regime of evaluation and accountability. In the 'corporate university' (Readings, 1996), outsiders as well as colleagues should be taken as actual or potential rivals. However, the cultural roots of this individualistic stance may lie in a much older heritage. A true researcher may identify with an omnipotent, autonomous individual, who repeats the discourse 'I-am-different', and rebels against both the 'ordinary world' and academia (Wager, 2000). This self-categorized 'alien' may be socially isolated, emotionally lonely and politically harmless.

However, the general accounts for the mixed response to our invitation should not displace the question of whether particular groups of academics are willing to participate in our project. Without their interest and effort, this exercise would remain as another study of failure in constructive and collaborative research.

Conclusion

The purpose of this text was to examine how a translation of PAR might work as an alternative survival strategy for academic communities of practice. We have characterized the way in which we work in the project, and explicated the promises and uncertainties of that work.

The promises of collaborative and constructive research may have relevance beyond our personal sphere of experience. The approach maintains hope for sensible purposes and equal social relations in research work. It may help in the reconstruction of academic identities and work agendas and in learning new skills. For the three academic
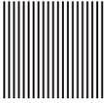
communities under consideration here the project promises a site for imagining desirable futures and for specifying feasible alternatives. However, we do not know yet how they want to use this site.

As an alternative strategy for the preservation and transformation of universities, we can surely say that the approach differs from the rhetoric of coerced change. Local, collaborative and constructive work is a strategy of resistance against the policies of bombarding universities and academics with financial weapons, provoking hostile rivalry, imposing hegemonic ideals of best practices and ignoring local diversity. In our experience, joint action and research, especially across disciplinary borders, sensitizes the collaborators to academic diversity and thereby contributes to its preservation.

However, this collaborative strategy has its ambiguities and uncertainties. If we cannot work out ways to meet these challenges, PAR projects may turn out to be either a form of colonialism or an ignored attempt at reform. We suggest that those who use this strategy be careful in translating AR ideals to their local context, distance themselves from the modernist will to change, and learn to appreciate different ideals and practices of research.

As far as we are concerned, we will continue practising PAR in the academic borderlands, equipped with serious reflexivity. We appreciate any help that might save us from scripting mere acts of PARody.

Acknowledgements

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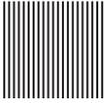
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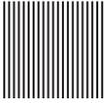
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DEALING WITH SHAME AT ACADEMIC WORK
- A LITERARY INTROSPECTION

Hans Mäntylä

ABSTRACT

It is not enough to understand shame only as a negative, individual or internal experience. It is also a highly social and organizational emotion based on internalized moral positions and judgements. It protects human integrity, inhibits human excess and arrogance, and warns when being abused. Having a sense of shame is, in fact, crucial in the ability to regulate social distance. Hence, why could we not see it as a resource?

In this text, I distinguish shame from other, related emotions, and clarify how 'internal' and 'external shame' differ in cognition and beliefs about the self. Then I illustrate and analyze what it means to fall into shame. Thereafter, I discuss how shame can be avoided, concealed or coped with. Finally, I take up the constructive meaning of shame, and emphasize the need to encounter it.

The main sources of literature that I draw on come from the psychoanalytic theories, sociology of emotions and philosophy. I provide the reader with brief vignettes of experiencing shame at my work in the academia.

INTRODUCTION

As we know, specific work activities are more than a set of robotic responses. They are felt, and shaped by feelings (1). Academic work makes no exception. The academics describe their work often as lonely, invisible work with hardly any feedback, often filled with 'something else' preventing them from doing the work they most of all would like to do. For most of them, their employment is unstable, insecure and stressful. Mutual competition and rivalry, and a constant search for appreciation infiltrate the working communities. Expressions of joy, hope or enthusiasm are rare. (See e.g. 2,3, for similar accounts also 4,5).

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So what? It's just academic work… as a professor describes it: *"…The holidays, weekends and nights go by without any time for your family… or for yourself. It sure is quite killing."* Or as a researcher says: *"…Everyone can do their own job there… whatever you like as long as you take care of your teaching responsibility and don't cross the borders too much… We groan and moan… and conform… but we can't resist, can we".* And yet, the same people "*enjoy*" their work, consider themselves "*privileged*" and "*free*", and describe the atmosphere of their units as "*good*" and the academic environment as the only one "*where I ever have felt at home.*" "*It's irrational*"… "*some kind of a madness*" they say - and I agree with them. (See 2).

How do we cope with the shadow side of the academic workplace? As one of the academics suggests towards the end of his interview: *"… Each of us ought to acknowledge the hell of a hassle in any discussion involving high levels of both expertise and competition, that pressure and fear build up. This is a hell of an issue, that is, that we all are afraid of being exposed" (2).* The ever lurking fear of being exposed. To be uncovered. What a terrifying idea.

What has this to do with the feeling of shame? That is what I will explore in this text.

RE-INTERPRETING SHAME WITH THE HELP OF LITERATURE

Out of all possible feelings, why have I chosen shame? The feeling shame is frequently associated with words like 'destructive', 'painful', 'excruciating' and 'humiliating'. And yet, I "voluntarily" enter into an exploration of it. Is this an other manifestation of academic madness or what? However bizarre it may seem, I prefer going towards shame, rather than withdrawing and protecting myself from it. In fact, I would like to see a sense of shame as a professional skill among us academics.

At present I'm working as a researcher at the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, in the department of Organization and Management. Along with our ongoing research on 'academic work' (see 2,6,7) I have realized that various feelings[1] are an essential part of our daily bread,

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[1] I use the words 'emotion' and 'feeling' interchangeably. They both refer to something that is at once a bodily response and an expression of judgement, at once somatic and cognitive, an expression of relationship, something that connect s me, my action and the social environment (8,9). Emotions are acts embedded in patterns of acts; their display is subject to rules and conventions; they are embedded in culturally specific moral orders and normative systems that allow for the assessment of correctness or impropriety of emotions. In other words, emotions can be understood as learned, rehearsed and worked upon; they are generated through interactions with others (10).

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including the ambiguous experiences of fear, guilt, anxiety and shame. Consequently, I feel that I have to somehow work both *on* and *with* shame. By working *on* shame I strive for a better understanding of the difficult feelings in our professional practice. By working *with* shame I mean that it is an emotional consequence of being involved, and as such impossible to exclude from human life. Hence, why could we not see it as a resource?

Historically, research in emotions has been imbued with biological and psychological determinism (11). Shame, in particular, has been defined in an extremely narrow way, mostly as a negative affect involving, primarily, internal feelings of disgrace (12). In psychoanalytic theory shame is given a central role in the causation of psychopathology. In Freud's thinking shame was a repressive emotion, seen only in children, women and savages and it was replaced by anxiety and guilt, the appropriate emotions for responsible (male) adults (13). Only recently, over the last 10 to 15 years shame has become a major theme of research, and this has resulted in a wide variety of theories in different schools of thought (see e.g. 14,15).

Parallel to the reawakening interest in shame, emotions have also developed into something of a sub-discipline in the study of work and organizations (11). The embeddedness of people's work experiences in interpersonal interactions and relationships means that the emotional toe and impact of these interactions is vital to an understanding of the work experience (e.g. 16). Shame, however, has not yet gained too much attention in this field.

Drawing mainly on psychological and sociological research, I regard shame as one of the very central aspects of academic work (see also 17). It is something that many of us are quite familiar with, and yet, it is difficult to recognize. It is easily concealed, rejected and not talked about. It is something of an unwanted and 'difficult-to-control experience' (15) that directs our daily dealings (18). Just as shame goes unacknowledged in most social interaction, it is also unacknowledged among social scientists (13). We are professionals in presenting us as "true academics" and we tend to repeat the discourse of omnipotence and independence, rather than shame (c.f. 4).

In organizations with solid and fixed power structures people are coupled with strong ties of shame to prevailing forms, ideas, views, beliefs and ideologies (9, 19). This is typical for such communities as religious, ideological, and political movements. A rigid, mostly implicit pressure to think, talk and behave in the 'right' way may dominate them. A firm and solid form of thinking provides with a strong identity and a desire to judge, criticize and be right. This desire is connected to holding on to power, and where power condenses, the pressure of feeling ashamed and violating others increases (9). These tendencies may be familiar in the university context, too.

Academic work organizations can be thought of as 'reputational systems' in which academic achievements build up an individual's reputation and resources are allocated according to his or her reputation (20). Shame does not build our reputation, but various shades of it lurk in every corner of our daily practices. For instance, our research, writing and teaching are excessively evaluated and scrutinized publicly when we apply for a vacancy or a grant. Through our applications, CVs, "portfolios" and in various appraisal procedures we are in a constant 'field of surveillance' (21). Most of us live in a spin of applications, in which we have to constantly apply for the possibility to continue with our work, and we are every now and then publicly judged to be (in)competent.

I do not assume that all academics have an obsession with shame, but I do think that shame is a considerably more important emotion in the academia than most accounts seem to acknowledge. Therefore it seems to be necessary to re-interpret these experiences, and seek for literature that would shed light on the various meanings of 'shame'. In this text I share some 'findings' from this exploration, and provide the reader with brief vignettes of experiencing shame in my work.

The main sources of literature that I have found come from the psychoanalytic theories (e.g. Pentti Ikonen and Eero Rechard, Paul Gilbert, Helen Lewis and Malcolm Pines), sociology of emotions (Thomas Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger) and philosophy (Kari Turunen).

It is not enough to look at shame only as a negative, individual and internal experience. It is also a highly social and organizational emotion based on internalized moral positions and judgements. With the help of shame I learn to respect both the social forms of my environment and human imperfection, and having a sense of shame is crucial in the ability to regulate social distance. Shame can be examined in terms of emotions, cognition and beliefs about the self, as behaviors and actions, and as dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Shame can also be used to describe phenomena at many different levels, including internal self-experiences, relational episodes, or cultural practices for maintaining honor and prestige (15).

In this paper I will, first, distinguish shame from other, related emotions. Secondly, I will clarify how 'internal' and 'external shame' differ in cognition and beliefs about the self. Thirdly, I will illustrate and analyze what it means to fall into shame. Thereafter, I will discuss how shame can be avoided, concealed or coped with. Finally, I will take up the constructive meaning of shame, and emphasize the need to encounter it.

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SHAME IN TERMS OF EMOTIONS

Shame can be described within a large family of emotions that include many cognates and variants. The Indo-European root of the word shame is "*skem*", which means "to cover, conceal or protect" something. I feel ashamed when something, which should have been kept secret, is exposed. It is like being uncovered, exposed to the other's eyes; to become conscious of the fact that the other sees you and you are not ready for, or willing to, being seen (8, 22).

The variations of the experience range from mild forms of social discomfort to intense forms of mortification. They bare such emotional states as embarrassment, dishonor, disgrace and humiliation (23). What unites all these cognates is that they involve reactions to rejection, or feelings of failure or inadequacy. They involve the feeling of *a threat to the social bond* (13).

As Goffman's (24) work suggests, all human beings are extremely sensitive to the exact amount of deference they are accorded to, and even slight discrepancies generate shame or embarrassment. Consequently, shame would be the most social of the basic emotions, and it is pervasive in virtually all social interaction (13).

Embarrassment, shame and guilt

'*Embarrassment*' can be characterized as social confusion, and it differs from shame primarily in the intensity of the feeling. When feeling embarrassed I usually do not judge myself as morally wretched. In embarrassing situations I am still able to smile, while in shame this is usually not possible (25).

Shame is also easily mistaken with the feeling of 'guilt' (22). The crucial idea in '*guilt*' is that I am concerned with *the deed*, with the wrong that (I think) I have done, and not with the kind of a person I believe I am. Having brought about what is forbidden I have harmed myself, but through guilt and '*regret*' I can take full responsibility of my deeds without identifying totally with them. Therefore, guilt may be quite specific and close to the surface, and I can wriggle out of guilt by saying: "Yes, I did it, but… I wasn't myself at the time. I really did not mean what I did." Shame does not provide space for this, because in shame I feel ashamed of *myself*. It seems best to withdraw and not to be seen - neither punishment nor forgiveness can here perform a meaningful function (26, 27).

Another difference lies in the duration of the feelings, as guilt may not last as long as shame does. Guilt is connected with some specific action, and not so much with my whole identity. Through regret I can pay my debt and thus,

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guilt is often considered as a strong motivation for correction and compensation. Shame, on the other hand, may last forever, because a shameful thought or act does not violate only laws, forms or other persons. In shame I have damaged myself by violating my own ideals. Guilt also involves the feeling that one is powerful enough to injure another, and, one is powerful enough to make amends. By contrast, shame feels like weakness and dissolution of the self. One may even wish that the self would disappear. Therefore, guilt can be regarded as a highly individualistic emotion, reaffirming the centrality of the isolated person, and shame as a social emotion, reaffirming the emotional interdependency of persons (13, 28).

Humiliation and anxiety

'Humiliation' is something that can be done to a person purely for another person's own purpose. It involves being put into a lowly, devalued and powerless position by someone who is more powerful at that moment. While both shame and humiliation focus on harm to the self, humiliation may be a less self-focused experience. The main focus is on the 'badness' of the other, a sense of injustice and unfairness, and often a burning desire for revenge. It may also involve shame over one's position after the attack, but it does not require any change in self-evaluations. One does not locate the source of external attack as arising from some flaw in the self. I may believe I deserve my shame, but I never believe I deserve my humiliation (15, 29).

'Anxiety' is also closely related to the shame experience, and it is difficult to consider shame without it. While shame sensitizes me to my environment and its (imaginary) demands, anxiety drives me into a difficult detachment. Practically, these feelings often occur simultaneously as a generally oppressive experience involving also a feeling of senselessness. However difficult experience this may be, it also provides a chance to reconstruct myself. In the vulnerable state of shame, anxiety, and senselessness we are forced to re-evaluate things, and the lack of these feelings may be considered as a sign of rigidity or numbness (9).

COGNITIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE SELF IN SHAME

I am never so painfully aware of myself as when experiencing shame (8). It always touches my whole self, and it feels like being in the social world as an 'undesired self', a self that I wish not to be. Because my self appears to be wretched and beyond remedy, shame is joined with a temptation to surrender myself. It demands me to change the whole self, in order to secure or sustain

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the approval from others. In other words, shame both connects and separates me from the significant (internalized) others, whose acceptance is of vital importance to my integrity (15, 26).

Internal shame - feeling ashamed of myself

Shame is also reflexive, and it can be taken as internal or external. The expression "I feel ashamed" actually means that "I feel ashamed of *myself*." Thus, the attention is focused towards my identity and my self. The feeling begins with the painful perception that I feel being rejected, uninvited and somehow wrong. In shame I do not consider myself desirable for the others, nor for myself, and as a sign of failure it involves painful internal comparisons. A disconnected observer (e.g. an internalized authority figure) disapproves of me, and even minor weaknesses seem to be remarkable. This negative self-evaluation is normally referred to as '*internal* 'or '*internalized shame*' (30-32), because it is primarily derived from how the self judges the self. Thus, one sees oneself as bad, flawed, worthless, and unattractive. Both the emotion and the related negative self-cognition of shame are *unwanted and involuntarily* aroused (15).

External shame - in the eyes of the others

'External shame' (31), on the other hand, is related to the belief that we cannot create positive images *in the eyes of the others*. We think that we are found to be lacking in talent, ability, intelligence or appearance. We believe that we will not be chosen and we will be passed over, ignored or actively rejected. The focus is on the outside world; how one is seen by others or how one lives in the eyes of the others (15, 33, 34). I experience the external source of shame as an injury, and this turns my self into an object of disappointment, (fear of) rejection, betrayal and judgement. The injury can be real or imagined, and the shameful message may vary from very subtle gestures to more overt or blatant forms (24). In these situations the other is perceived as separate and unlike oneself - the bond is intact and there is no reciprocal connection (13, 23).

In the pursuit of reciprocity

Ikonen and Rechardt (26) combine both the internal and external aspects of shame in their definition of shame as "*a reaction against the absence of approving reciprocity*". They condense the experience of shame into three basic elements (26: pp. 132-133, 35: p. 102; *lingual expressions modified)*:

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1) **To be seen when seeking for reciprocity**: I can seek reciprocity in various ways by approaching the other(s). I expose myself and observe the others, while having the feeling of being seen. The pursuit of reciprocity may be seen in various ways, in my uncontrolled and uninhibited behavior, or in my enthusiasm.

2) **To experience my self as unfit in such a situation**: I may fail in approaching others or my ideals, or in my attempts to identify with someone. The other is focal in my awareness, and I might view him or her as caring less about the relationship than I do. The other may appear as observing unresponsively, powerful and in control of the situation, or laughing and ridiculing, or even hostile. The other's self appears intact (23).

3) **Turning against the self and the other(s) connected with my shame**: When my pursuit of mutual reciprocity fails, my whole being appears to be wrong. I have acted, thought or reacted otherwise than I presume I was supposed to do. My action is not in accordance with certain forms, or it does not fit with what I believe in - what I am or would like to be. Consequently, I feel ashamed of myself (36). Turning against my self appears in the collapse of my self-esteem and in the stagnation of my self. Turning against the other(s) may appear as 'shame-rage' (32), humiliation, dejection and disgracing or in invalidating others (26, 35).

I can, as well, feel ashamed on behalf of someone else. When feeling ashamed on behalf of the other, my shame is connected with the belief that there is a perfect or ideal performance, and I presume that he or she has totally misunderstood the situation (9).

'FALLING' INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF SHAME

In the experience of shame the point of departure is the hope for reciprocity. Ikonen & Rechardt (26, 35) suggest that 'the pursuit of reciprocity' involves two simultaneous but opposite forces. In the psychoanalytic literature these forces are called 'Eros' and 'Thanatos'.

Eros aims at increasing reciprocity by creating connections and thus enriching and enlivening the world of experience. *Thanatos*, in contras, tries to calm down and reduce distracting experiences by limiting, restricting and cutting connections. In shame the tension between these two forces becomes acute. When suffering from shame, I might ask myself: In what kind of a contradiction

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am I, and from what separation do I suffer? Is the conflict between my own image of myself and the image the other(s) may have about me (external source)? Or is the conflict more internal, a discrepancy between my experience and the person I think I am (36)?

Experiencing shame in the midst of writing this paper

In academic work, these kinds of contradictions are annoyingly familiar. For example, while writing this paper, they seem to torment me again and again. I have this "wonderful" idea; I start to work on it, and intent to produce a conference paper. It is not any piece of paper. It is the "ticket of admission" to the 16th EGOS Colloquium on "Organizational Praxis", and it is going to be presented to the participants of the theme-group "Academics at Work". I hope to be understood and "seen". In spite of all the "it's only a draft" excuses I reveal myself. I hope for reciprocity, fear for indifference, and feel like 'a living contradiction' (37). I hate my own dawdling, but also reach peaks of enthusiasm. When I realize that I only have a few hours left to finish the conference paper, and to expose it to the group, I fall into anxiety.

At the outset of the conference group, I am supposed to introduce myself, reach out, and offer something of myself and of my work to the others. Again, I hope to be met with reciprocity. As a participant of the group, I feel that the opening phase is loaded with a fear of being ashamed. In particular, if I am asking for a deviation from the standard procedure, I experience an intense conflict between my hope for open, personal, situated and meaningful encounters, and the fear of indifference. Inviting connection is scary, because when reaching out for a link with the others I may be met with no response. Consequently, I feel a strong pressure towards conforming to the standard form of working (c.f. 38). By the 'standard form' I refer to a typical academic way of working, in which the process of getting to know each other is skipped totally or each participant just briefly states one's name and institutional affiliation. In other words, 'Eros' is skipped and 'Thanatos' takes the lead.

A few months after the conference, I'm offered an opportunity to publish my paper in this journal. Thereby the text might even end up as one of the articles in my dissertation. Thinking back over the conference phase, it feels OK to present "a first draft" on the topic with some open ideas and many loose ends. However, the thought of this as an article in my future dissertation turns on the torment again. How do I deal with my own expectations towards this particular piece of work, with the more or less internalized ideals of a decent article in organization studies, with the conflicting feedback that my "conference draft" has received, and, with all of this within the deadline set by the editor? In other

words, how do I deal with my enthusiasm, my internal demands for control, my imperfection, and the fear of being ashamed, while exposing my thoughts in this publication?

Analyzing shame through The Fall

Historical text and novels can also be used for analyzing shame (12). A fascinating text about experiencing shame can be found in **'The Fall'** of Adam and Eve (*Moses 3*). It can be read as a story of knowing, of expanding our consciousness, as well as of the limited scope and imperfection that inevitably belong to our life. The Fall is also a story about breaking taboos, and of its shocking consequences for all the parties involved. Breaking down a taboo threatens the order once established and manifests a risk of undoing laws, forms and borders that have not been questioned before. Although 'The Fall' is usually treated from the perspective of Adam and Eve's 'guilt', one of the central themes of the story seems to be 'shame'.

> Initially, Adam and Eve, the innocent living beings exist within God's experience and rules. No conscience, no self, no difference, no doubt.

> The Temptation: The snake raises a doubt, tempts the innocent one and feeds the desire to be 'your Self'. Opposing beliefs are presented, plus a promise (hope) of "knowing…". The curiosity is awakened.

> The Act: The innocent one follows the 'intellectual' curiosity and tastes the fruit. While eating: the experience is good and natural - delicious, something to be offered to the other too. Breaking the divine prohibition, the taboo.

> The Reaction: Becoming aware of each other, their humanity, their difference and the violation of the "law". Emergence of the feeling of guilt. Covering their bareness, concealing and hiding.

> *Being Exposed: "Reciprocity" with The God fails !*

> The Consequences: Judgement, banishment, extinction, and alienation. Curse, suffering and pain.

> *Being ashamed of your self !*

As a consequence of the breaking down of the divine order, Adam and Eve were cast out, excluded, and alienated from the belonging of all living beings in

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Paradise. Their "innocent self", "natural" way of being, was lost for ever. The spontaneous experience of pleasure was first entangled in guilt, and later, while being exposed by God, they were condemned to an everlasting shame (see e.g. 39).

To me, The Fall seems like an archetypal story of being ashamed of one's experience and of oneself. In the context of academic work, this analogue rises several interesting questions: Is this the story telling about the *fear of being exposed*, about this pervasive feeling in our work, which some of us may recognize? Our work, particularly in social science, is grounded on being involved, seen and recognized in the eyes of the others in our respective fields. What if my thoughts and ideas are not understood and my 'contribution' is met with critical rejection and/or indifference? What if I am exposed of being ignorant (an academic taboo?) and there is no mutual reciprocity? Do I give up the struggle with my conference paper or article and withdraw (turning against myself), or do I perhaps blame the audience and try to invalidate the others (turning against the others)? How do I encounter both the others and myself with respect when I face the lack of reciprocity? To what kind of a God do I own my work? What kind of a role does the 'scientific methodology' play in it? Is it something to be worshipped, challenged or experimented with?

Reading the story "backwards" is particularly interesting. How to find the way back to yourself, to your spontaneous being from which you may have been separated in deep experiences of shame. How to encounter the guardians of paradise, 'the cherubs' (e.g. your critical colleagues, professors, or the journal editors) and 'the glancing sword' (e.g. the 'scientific methodology') on the way back towards life free of shame? In other words, how to become the master of your own experience - to be a Human Being rather than a mere Human Doing (25)? From this position, I might have to reconsider my view on the 'social construction of reality', at least the extreme form of it (see e.g. Hess 40). This stance implies that there is nothing to be discovered beyond the 'made' or 'constructed' world. In other words, we are nothing but Human Doings. I would, however, prefer to be a Human Being also in my academic work.

AVOIDING, CONCEALING, AND COPING WITH SHAME

The hiding did not really end at Adam's and Eve's skulking in the bushes. The desire to conceal a display of shame is well recognized in the literature (33). Sudden shame causes such a blow of losing control over oneself that it can be compared to death. In phenomenological terms, the experience of shame has been described as a kind of inward explosion or collapse (18, 32; ref. in 26). It motivates hiding, and a desire to "sink into the ground".

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The indefinite desire "to die" means that I would rather cease to exist than fall into the hands of those in front of whom I have been ashamed. This 'hiding' is also a paradoxical expression of 'hope'. The others' attitude towards me is important, and I want to maintain a good relationship with them. A display of shame might signal to the other the recognition that I see myself as inferior or emotionally disturbed (15). If I am able to hide this, I might maintain the approval of the others (25, 26).

The various reactions and defenses against shame are though difficult to hide. As an immediate reaction, I lose my vitality, my enthusiasm dies, and my action stops. The 'hot' response often involves blushing, trembling, and other behaviors that seem to function as damage limitation (a hunched posture, eye gaze avoidance, covering the face with hands, fleeing, or remaining motionless; see 12, 15, 26). The immediate response triggers also other behaviors, with which I may try to cope with, or conceal, shame as it occurs. Another option would be to engage in various 'safety behaviors' (15), and try to avoid being shamed altogether.

The vicious circle of shame

A very characteristic defense against shame is to hide from the pain of rejection by resorting to anger. Shame and anger get easily joined because of the social nature of shame. I experience shame as an (imagined or real) attack by another person, whom I see as the source of hostility. My anger is a message about how enraged I feel at my inferior place in the eyes of the other.

If my shame is not acknowledged, I may be caught in an emotional trap, in which shame serves both as an inhibitor and as a generator of anger. The unacknowledged shame inhibits me from expressing my anger directly towards the other, and this generates simultaneously even further anger. Eventually my withholding behavior escalates into a 'shame-rage' (32) that may appear as demeaning criticism, blame, or hostility towards the other or myself (15, 23, 26, 33, 41). The cycle may result in a quiet and lonely depression, in which I feel like "I'm good-for-nothing, unworthy and nobody cares about me". Or it may lead me into an agonizing shame-rage, which is the more likely to transform into a depression the more unworthy I feel myself (26).

The vicious circle of shame can easily be found, for example, in an academic seminar setting. While 'bypassing' (42) even a brief dose of shame, I may start to dawdle, hesitate and fumble. In my ideation I may engage in flickering comparisons, where my self appears inferior in various ways. While becoming envious of others, of persons who seem more intelligent or active, I start feeling

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angry because of my dawdling. I try to protect myself against my own feelings by masking my potential shame with anger. This protection evokes a new dose of shame and further anger as protection against it. Often all this happens unconsciously, and without being noticed by the other(s). I only start feeling averse, weary and tired of both the others and myself. When unrecognized, this loop may extend indefinitely (13).

I believe that most of us have experienced some of this, but for some people the feeling of shame is so intense that they constantly live in a kind of general state of shame (26).

Disguising the nature of shame

Another common 'face saving' strategy to cope with or conceal shame involves giving it a label that disguises its nature. One can say, for example, "I felt really *weird*". The experience may be removed from the person altogether by saying, "It was not I who felt embarrassed, but the *situation* was uncomfortable". The feeling is denied and projected onto an external source (23). Defamation is also something I might fall into as a teacher when trying to discipline or subordinate my students. This may happen especially when I am struggling with their possible contempt, invalidation or aggression towards me or my teaching (26). If I want to teach by means other than lecturing facts about "how things are", I have to encounter living people whom I cannot control.

An attempt to reject and block the feeling of shame totally generates 'shamelessness'. I might reject the important others and not care about their attitude. Or, I may fanatically direct my vitality towards the others and repeatedly react shameful situations. The former mode of shamelessness can be regarded as naïve indifference, and the latter as defiant or sarcastic impudence in which the shameless confronts his/her environment, including him/herself, with constant acts of humiliation (9, 26). At its worst, shamelessness turns me into a cynic who manipulates, violates, and demoralizes values that others consider sacred (8).

Withdrawing from the spot or developing perfectionist standards

Shame can also be avoided by *withdrawing from those situations* where it could be experienced. Avoiding help-seeking, socializing, or competition are examples of dealing with shame by never putting oneself in situations where shame could arise (15).

Apart from avoiding shameful situations altogether, I could also try to *compensate for my potential sources of inferiority* by developing perfectionist

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standards. These can be aimed at myself or demanded of others, and they spring out of the belief that others expect high standards of me (15). The purpose of oversized ideals and oppressive ambition is to prevent a direct connection with my self (26, 43).

To avoid shame I might also desperately cling to the rules of the 'fair play' and take offence when the others do not follow these rules (8). Shame can also be avoided through compulsive maintenance of excellence, extravagant behavior, and various addictions (26, 41).

In my work, these coping, concealing and hiding experiences arise, for example, when hearing the excessive talk about "The University of Excellence" (see e.g. 44). I find the "excellence" discourse problematic in several ways. The compulsive need to become a "Leading University" and a recognized partner among the "Leading Universities in the World", combined with a "binding" identity encompassing all members of the Helsinki School of Economics community, does not stimulate my pride of being a member of the HSE, as intended. I do not consider myself a case of excellence, nor do I believe I ever will be one. Consequently, the oppressive ambition and oversized ideals that are expected from the whole community highlight the 'undesired self' (15) in me. They turn me into a "resource" and make me feel somehow unfit. It would be, for most of us, much easier to deal with a more human strategy, grounded in our actual work and daily experience, I think.

THE CONSTRUCTIVE MEANING OF SHAME

Unfortunately, in common parlance the word shame refers generally to a negative, crisis emotion closely connected with disgrace. As a distracting feeling it may seem, this view is much too narrow (13, 33). Shame has also several constructive meanings, such as "the master emotion" (45), "a kind of endogenous master" (26), and "a kind of sense" (9). It serves as "a distance regulator", and it functions like "a thermostat": it helps to regulate relationships, and if it fails to function (e.g. when it is repressed, unconscious, ignored, or projected) the regulation becomes impossible (23). In other words, shame directs me in considering other people and other ways of life; it keeps me awake and guides my socialization.

Both 'shame' and its close cognate 'guilt' are powerful regulators of norms. They teach us, through painful but inevitable trial and error, to adjust to social roles. With shame and guilt we learn how to influence others, where, how, and to what extent it is proper to open up for others, how to regulate

closeness and distance, and how to avoid hurting both others and ourselves. By the help of shame and guilt we learn modesty, tact, social sensitivity and respect for others. We all are also threatened by the acts of a person not recognizing these norms. Shame tells us that we are both separate and social beings, and guards the boundaries of privacy and intimacy. In other words, shame protects human integrity, inhibits human excess and arrogance, and it warns me when I am abused (8, 23, 28, 36, 46).

As a conscious and realized feeling that protects and directs reciprocity, the experience of shame is usually brief and transient. A constructive feature of shame is also that it directs me towards renewal. Shame motivates me to undo inappropriate relationships, and it may direct my energy into new, hopefully more functioning forms of interaction. As a social sense, it primarily seems to maintain various forms power, because when avoiding shame I especially try to comply with pre-given forms. It feels good to master the forms for a while, but I often start searching for new ideas when the old ones become stale. Eventually, I feel ashamed when repeating myself for too long, and my shame starts to brake false standardization. Thus, sensitivity of shame is a condition of mobility and creativity, even though it may be painful (9).

The interaction of power, hatred, and shame in conceptual thinking

Shame can also be regarded as one of the central aspects of 'thinking', a very important part of our academic work. Turunen (9) seems to have a point in claiming that (conceptual) thinking is always grounded on some shades of shame. However, to understand the connection between 'thinking' and 'feeling ashamed' I have to explore his thoughts a bit more.

According to Turunen, the basic elements of thinking are 'power', 'hatred' and 'shame'. In a balanced situation, all of these three dynamic forces are in a living interaction with each other. The third force somehow balances or neutralizes the tension between the other two. Regarding *shame* he presents the following rule of thumb: "Always when I experience shame there is a power, which I feel I have to comply with. It might be a form or thought which is easy to recognize. It may also be some deep, internalized power, the origin of which is not so easy to point out. The experience of shame might also be suppressed, if I cannot acknowledge a power which is a central part of my identity (9)"

Power, Turunen says, would be a kind of a basic pursuit of thinking (when separated from the deliberate 'use of power'). It is a thinking-like phenomenon, which analyses, reduces, unites, and represents order and forms. Something that is unorganized and lacking thought (e.g. a draft of this paper) always somehow evokes feelings of shame, even when I cannot identify any

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particular form that I would like to comply with or react against. The mere absence or lack of personal power (knowledge) tends to create shame. When I happen to do something "wrong", I usually try to solve (think through) how I got there. In other words, my *thinking* sets matters into order and form, and I defend myself against the chaotic characteristics of life by simplifying them with my 'thinking'. My own thoughts are my shelter and refuge (9: p. 92).

'*Hatred*', the third element of thinking appears seldom as such in our experiences. It seems that we rather transform hatred into more appropriate experiences like 'irritation' and 'anger'. Thinking, however, always contains an aggressive feature. While putting things in order and a specific form, thinking is joined with aggression towards other forms. Disorder, confusion and unpredictability evoke also aggression. People representing a power are aggressive at forces that threaten their power or identity. Where power condenses usually also hatred increases, even the possibility of violence. Sometimes hatred is also the only means to part from a power. It constitutes a grip, and as a constructive source of energy it serves independence, the gaining of autonomy, and it helps to distinguish between others and me. This prevents me from sliding into others' spheres of power, and enables me to create new thoughts and ways of life (9: pp. 90-91).

When I happen to fall into shame or I am being disgraced, I may transform my shame into anger. If I have to bear a lot of shame, I might even end up in a stern spin of anger, because it might be the only defense against the racking and uncontrollable feelings of shame. Problems emerge, when I get too hooked on power, hatred, or shame, or when I repress one of them, not being able to encounter it (9: p. 93). Avoiding shame, in particular, prevents me from thinking and perceiving 'realities'. It causes thoughtlessness, and launches an extensive denial of reality (47; ref. in 26).

The line between constructive and destructive, socializing and isolating shame is, however, very delicate. The feeling of shame may become either too strong or too weak on the collective or individual level. A well-developed 'sense of shame' sustains considerate behavior and creative thinking, but an excessive dose of shame reduces spontaneity and leads to social avoidance or other abnormality. A rigorous or an inconsistent environment often evokes unexpected and undue experiences of shame, which may shrivel me up in my shame or lead to repression, hate, and destructive behavior. Trying to repress shame totally, on the other hand, makes me shameless, which also enables behavior that can be violating both for me and for my environment (9, 36).

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ENCOUNTERING SHAME - "MAYBE I'M NOT THAT BAD, AFTER ALL"

Recognizing shame is often very difficult because of the very characteristic of shame - it has to be concealed. We also know rather little about how people try to repair themselves and their relationships whenever shame is involved. People suffering from chronic feelings of shame usually reveal very little of themselves and distance themselves, for example, by rationalizing, resorting to sarcasm or indifference. Even admitting that we might need a bit of help can be intolerably humiliating. The threat of exposing a weakness also reinforces all defenses against the experience of shame. However, a better awareness of the shameful parts in us means that a somehow more 'real', more free and unconstrained image of us may emerge. The increasing awareness of shame has certainly helped me in writing this paper, and *vice versa*.

The general guideline to encountering shame seems confusingly simple: Identifying and calling shame by its right name is the beginning of understanding and managing it. Simply talking about shame, humiliation, and losing of self-respect may have a strong effect on a 'patient', a friend or a colleague. By taking up shame as a subject and naming it, in a favorable relationship, may ease, open up deadlocks, and restore our creativity. If timed right, it may give us freedom that perhaps was not possible before.

The act of communicating about shame can be an experience of entering into the mind and feelings of another person. Sharing one's shame with the other can strengthen the relationship: *"The very fact that shame is an isolating experience also means that if one can find ways of sharing and communicating it this communication can bring about particular closeness with other persons* (26; in 13)". If one is in the receiving end in conversations involving shame, the essential thing is to look "into the eyes of shame", and to be able to bear the painful feelings without becoming angry, defensive, impatient or reserved. Bypassing or avoiding shame leaves it unstructured, and as such it returns over and over again with all of its consequences.

The professionals offer also '*humor'* as a constructive defense against a destructive shame reaction. You can benevolently laugh at your inadequacies when you realize, that maybe they do not represent your *whole self*. "Maybe I'm not that… bad, miserable, awkward, wretched… as I thought of myself, after all…?" Being able to relate humorously to oneself is a capacity to look upon one's self from the outside, just as in external shame. The point is, however, that humor has to come from within. Humorous viewpoints expressed by others tend to provoke shame (48).

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Historically, shame and sin have also been linked, and there have been various religious means for repair (e.g. confession, penance). Repair is based on the idea that one can restore one's self (and one's social image), and the repair of shame involves both forgiveness of oneself and a belief in the forgiveness of others (15). This bears closely on the issue of reconciliation. Depressed and shame-prone people may lack reconciliation skills, as well as opportunities (49). Some individuals with shame problems believe that others will never forgive or forget even if they act forgiving. A deeper understanding of how we forgive ourselves, as well as accept and trust the forgiveness of others, could prove useful in understanding the links of shame to both psychopathology and our creativity. Psychological therapies are often about self-forgiveness, reduction of harsh, internal self-attacks, and about focusing on the belief that one is forgiven (31).

A CONCLUSION - THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHAME AND OTHER EMOTIONS

In his study of the "civilizing process", Norbert Elias (50) pointed out that the awareness of shame has been declining for hundreds of years. Today, it would appear that most states of shame are either unconscious, bypassed or misnamed (42). We all have a tendency to transfer our painful feelings onto others, and the acts of humiliation can be considered a way of projecting one's own shame onto another person. On a cultural level, this tendency is often visible in political, theoretical, and religious disputes and in everyday perceptions of other cultures and people from a different societal class, etc. On a large scale, extreme patriotism in itself is possible only with the transfer of shame, and unacknowledged shame is one of the forces that tear societies apart. Acknowledged shame, on the other hand, could be the glue that holds relationships together. On the societal level, a greater capacity for containing shame would even prevent many wars and battles (13, 51, 52).

On the organizational level, the ability to recognize, to be aware of, and to contain emotions (including shame) can be regarded as *professional skill*. Emotions direct our action, thinking, and experiencing both as individuals and as members of our work communities. If the work involved in honoring and encountering emotions counted as real work, we would, however, need a radically different language of 'work' and 'competence' (53).

On a personal level, being able to deal with shame is of particular importance, I think, because it is an essential part of 'being involved', and because of its close connection with our creativity. Learning itself is based on the recognition of our incompleteness, imperfection and uncertainty. Recognizing these

sides in ourselves always involves some shades of shame. Besides the pain this can also be a liberating experience in which shame might be transformed into a source of learning. It can provoke us to strive after our potential and release our energy from maintaining rigidity and bias to more appropriate and flexible ways of life (26, 36). It is also particularly significant how others recognize my unique character - whether they strengthen or suppress it. My sense of uniqueness does certainly not become stronger in a community in which shame is misused by force (8).

From a methodological perspective, recognizing and working with emotions can also have a significant impact on the research practice. When entering into a research relationship, and maybe into an action-research type of relationship in particular, one encounters "*the whole gamut of human feelings: love, hate, fear, conflict, confusion, projections, defenses against anxiety, intra- and interpersonal processes, group dynamic features, organizational cultures, values, norms, etc.*" (54: p. 10). Accepting the various feelings as a part of the research process and reflecting upon them provide us with an important source of information. Building on one's own feelings provides insight and connection, and a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study (55). In other words, social science contains the possibility of creating knowledge that recognizes, expresses and honors feelings (53).

Paying special attention to shame can be particularly important while working on academic practices, and reconstructing our work activities and academic identities. Feeling ashamed in your work is a sign of something important. It may lead into a personal re-evaluation of our work, of our relations with our colleagues and students, or maybe of our academic identities. It may also be a sign of a malfunctioning academic practice that ought to be renewed.

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Conflicting Time Perspectives in Academic Work

Oili-Helena Ylijoki and Hans Mäntylä

ABSTRACT. This article explores the diversity of time perspectives in academic work. The background of the study stems from recent changes in university management and funding, which impose new demands for academic work, including its temporal order. Drawing on focused interviews with 52 academics, we discern four core time perspectives according to which academics experience their work: scheduled time, timeless time, contracted time and personal time. Scheduled time refers to the accelerating pace of work, timeless time to transcending time through immersion in work, contracted time to short-term employment with limited future prospects and finally, personal time to one's temporality and the role of work in it. In addition, we discuss the relationships between the different time perspectives, focusing on dilemmas and tensions between them. KEY WORDS • academic work • autonomy • dilemmas • higher education • time

Introduction

In this article we explore the temporal structures of academic work. Drawing on interview material with 52 Finnish academics, we discern a variety of time perspectives according to which academics perceive their work and orient it. In addition, we explore the relationships, tensions and dilemmas between different time perspectives prevailing in the present-day organizational context in academia.

The impetus for our analysis was our strong initial impression that accounts of heavy time pressure constituted a prominent and pervasive feature in academic work. In the interviews academics constantly relate how pressed they

are with their work, how they do not have enough time to carry out their core tasks and how powerless and stressed they feel because of this. The topic is by no means unfamiliar to our own daily experiences in academia. It seems evident that whenever two or more academics happen to meet they complain about the lack of time. Problems with time management also resonate with a large number of empirical studies reporting an accelerating pace of work and lack of time, both in general (e.g. Hochschild, 1997; Rutherford, 2001; Sennett, 1998) and in academic work in particular (e.g. Barry et al., 2001; Kogan et al., 1994; Rhoades, 1998).

Following the doctrine of 'new public management' (e.g. Hood, 1995), managerialistic practices have been introduced into Finnish universities as in several other western countries, evoking new pressures for accountability, cost-effectiveness, efficiency and engaging in income-generating activities. Correspondingly the funding patterns of universities have changed since the amount of external revenue has grown and academics, departments and universities have had to consider how best to organize themselves so as to be able to compete for external funds (Dearlove, 1998). Even if these structural changes do not have any mechanical or direct impact on academic work, they mean new demands and constraints for academics (e.g. Prichard and Willmott, 1997; Trowler, 1998; Ylijoki, forthcoming). It has been claimed that due to the growing market orientation and managerialism, the university has been transformed into a 'McUniversity' (Parker and Jary, 1995) and an 'academic assembly line' (see Barry et al., 2001) in which academics are treated increasingly as 'managed professionals' (Rhoades, 1998) or as 'state-subsidised entrepreneurs' (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This no doubt attacks the traditional basic principles of academic work, including its pace and rhythm. The growing demands of a range of unrelated tasks have increased to the point where the fragmentation of time and energy is perceived by academics as seriously undermining their work satisfaction and their productivity (McInnis, 1996). As Vidovich and Currie (1998) conclude, academics have greater accountability but less autonomy than before.

On the basis of these preliminary observations we felt an urge to both understand better and examine in more detail the nature of the academics' experiences of lack of time. Although accounts of time pressure were a pervasive theme in the interviews, the academics also relied on other types of temporal dimensions when accounting for their work. Hence we ended up questioning what kinds of time perspectives academics live by in academia and how such perspectives relate to one another.

The rationale behind our queries is twofold. On the one hand we want to enhance our insight into the characteristics of academic work. Since the temporal dimensions have been lacking in research on academic work, we feel that it will shed new light on the current nature of working in academia and the

problems encountered in it. On the other hand we strive to highlight the importance of temporal aspects in organizational life in general and to point out how profoundly the constructions of time shape individuals' experiences in organizations. The time experiences we study are to a large degree not specific only to academia but reflect general trends in working life.

Experiencing Time in Organizations

Our point of departure is that time constitutes one of the most fundamental aspects of human experience and of social life. In an organizational context temporal orders and structures belong to the core of the cultural stock of knowledge according to which members construct their experiences and act in the world of everyday life (see Schutz, 1970). Socially constructed time facilitates organizational life by providing individuals with resources to orient themselves and to cooperate with each other while synchronizing the activities in the organization (see Zucchermaglio and Talamo, 2000). These temporal orders include explicit schedules, implicit rhythms and cycles of behaviour as well as cultural norms about time in organizations (Blount and Janicik, 2001). For a newcomer, it is therefore of crucial importance to become socialized into the shared, taken-for-granted features of the social time prevailing in the organization (e.g. Starkey, 1988: 100).

From another angle it can be claimed that the socially shared perceptions of time in an organization act not only as a cultural resource but also as an external constraint to which individuals have to submit themselves. The temporal structures in organizations repress individuals' experiences and impose discipline and standardized requirements on them. Hassard (1991: 110), for instance, claims that 'joining a modern work organisation represents the final stage in our conditioning to "organised" time consciousness'. In this view temporal structures form a sort of prison in which members of the organization are confined.

Furthermore, time is not only socially constructed but also physiologically determined. Although the distinction between social time and natural time is far from clear-cut (Adam, 1995), it is important to note that there are limits beyond human will to how time can be constructed. Natural time – including birth and death, day and night, sleep and being awake, etc. – moulds the characteristics of social time and shapes our temporal experiences. Life entails some invariable temporal forms, such as the unidirectionality of the cycle of life that we simply have to accept as a basis of the human condition, also in organizational settings.

It follows that there is not only one time but a multitude of times according to which individuals organize their experiences and make sense of their lives (cf. Roberts, 1999). Thus time in one form or another constitutes an integral feature

in human life at both the individual and the organizational levels. As Young and Schuller (1988: 3) put it: 'no one can escape from time'.

Our focus is on temporal perspectives in academic organizations. We do not, however, enter into a phenomenological study of time even if it is evident that different individuals experience time differently due to their unique biographically determined situations (see Flaherty, 1999; Schutz, 1970). In other words, our aim is not to analyse individuals' idiosyncratic lived experiences of time but to capture the collectively shared time perspectives according to which academics account for their work. This focus has been chosen in order to reach a better understanding of the overall nature of academic work and its tensions in present-day universities.

Interview Material

The empirical basis of our analysis is composed of focused interviews with 52 academics at five Finnish universities. The interviews were carried out in two separate projects during the period 1998–9, both of them examining the changing nature of academic work amid increasing external pressures and demands. The focus varied between the two projects. One was directed broadly towards all aspects of academic work (research, teaching, expert services and self-governance of academic units) (see Mäntylä, 2000a; Räsänen and Mäntylä, 2001) and the other more strictly to research work (Hakala and Ylijoki, 2001; Ylijoki, 2002, forthcoming). All the interviewees had worked for several years or decades in academia, thus having wide-ranging experiences of academic work. Their employment varied considerably, ranging from tenure to temporary posts and contract-based employment.

In order to capture the internal diversity of working environments within academia, interviews were conducted in six distinct units, differing from each other in several important dimensions. In terms of disciplinary basis, the units represent the humanities, the social sciences and technology. Half of the units are traditional university departments focusing on both teaching and research, while the other half are more research-oriented units with only few or no teaching duties. Likewise, the funding of the units varies as some of them operate mainly on budget funding while others are heavily dependent on external income.

The interviews lasted from one to two hours and they were tape-recorded and transcribed. They were conducted by six interviewers altogether, mostly by one interviewer alone, sometimes by a pair of interviewers. The interviews covered a wide range of themes, starting from the personal work history of the interviewee and proceeding to the present working situation. It is noteworthy that no questions about temporal features of work were expressly asked – it was a

theme that the interviewees themselves brought forward while accounting for their work.

It was peculiar to these interview relationships that both parties – the interviewee and the interviewers – were academics sharing a lot of common knowledge of academic life and its recent changes. However, as interviewers we did not enter into reciprocal expositions of our own experiences in university. Instead of taking the role of an active discussant we restricted ourselves to the role of an empathetic listener and allowed the respondents to narrate their work experiences openly (see Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Yet, it was obvious from many explicit or implicit signs that the interviewees by and large regarded us as members of the same professional community, thus being able to understand many of the specific characteristics, requirements and experiences of academic work. We perceived this kind of common ground to be helpful as it made interaction smooth and in a way evoked interviewees' trust in us. The interviewees seemed willing to give accounts of their work, share their experiences with us and reflect on their own working situation.

On the other hand, being members of the same academic world also raises problems. In particular, it may hinder us from reaching an analytical distance, since the interviewees' accounts come extremely close to our own work in academia. The danger is that we interpret the data too narrowly through our own experiences and presuppositions, thus silencing interviewees' voices and biasing our material. Being aware of this danger we read – and reread – the material with extra care. As our analysis offers a rather pessimistic outlook on present-day academia, we paid special attention to ascertain that we did not somehow force the data to fit our assumptions and that our interpretations are in concordance with the whole of the interviews.

In our data-driven analysis we first selected all interview extracts that included a temporal reference of any kind. After reading the numerous extracts over and over again, we ended up grouping them into four basic categories, which capture the most distinctive features of the time perspectives in our data. It is important to note that the categories do not refer to individuals but to temporal dimensions in their accounts – as a norm, the academics rely on several, often to all four, temporal perspectives in their accounts.

We have named the time perspectives scheduled time, timeless time, contracted time and personal time. Next, we shall present each of them in turn and then discuss their reciprocal relationships. We use ample interview extracts in order to offer the reader a flavour of the empirical basis of the four time categories we have constructed. The quotes were translated from Finnish. We begin with what we call scheduled time because it is the most prominent perspective in our data, constituting a general frame for academic work against which the other perspectives are dealt with.

Scheduled Time

The most common time perspective in the academics' accounts of their work is scheduled time. By this term we mean all expressions referring to working according to externally imposed and controlled timetables, such as project deadlines, lecturing hours and administrative meetings. Although academics usually have some negotiation power in setting the schedules, this sort of time is often felt as an external constraint to which one simply has to adapt. The point is made exceptionally plain by one project researcher:

> The situation is such that if a client, a company, says to me that we need you then and then, in that case I will go. Because the bread is there on the factory floor, you have to be humble.

What is also crucial in scheduled time is its accelerating pace. According to the academics interviewed, there are more and more externally imposed obligations, which have to be met on a shorter and shorter time span. As a consequence, working days become very long and fragmented. Furthermore, a lack of time and living constantly under time pressure characterizes the everyday reality in academic work. One professor, for instance, states that 'time is the only thing I would need to buy. I don't need anything else but time. It has been the most scarce resource in my life.' This sort of time pressure often leads to feelings of being overstrained and distressed as is manifest in one project researcher's description of her current situation:

> I can't find time anywhere, I don't have enough strength, I can't manage it. (. . .) In this situation one rushes from one necessity to the next and is always grateful that one manages to get on with it. There are so few moments, so little mental space to get rid of this daily mess, to somehow collect your own thoughts.

Thus, from the perspective of scheduled time academic work begins to be reminiscent of a survival game amid too many obligations: 'You take care of what is falling on top of you first and then the next thing and in the end you always realise what was left undone.'

    The experience of heavy time pressure is widely shared among academics in all positions. In the case of university teachers, the problem springs mainly from the difficulties of combining teaching, research and administrative tasks, as teachers are expected to perform more effectively in each task. Project researchers, instead, face the problem that project schedules are becoming tighter and tighter. Moreover, while often working on several projects simultaneously, they have to try to balance between a variety of schedules. This is illustrated in the following quote:

> At times it leads to doing really an awfully lot of overtime in order to manage deadlines that happen to be at the same time as the deadline for the applications

for the next project. And then one works at weekends and sometimes at night in order to manage everything. This is not of course pleasant over a longer period of time. But in these situations you have to strike when the iron is hot. If you let it go then you will never get that opportunity again.

One specific element in experiencing scheduled time is how the new information technology, especially email, affects academic work. On the one hand, email is said to make communication easier and faster, thereby saving time and making the use of time more flexible. On the other hand, it may also lead to an increase of the amount of communication as well as to the need to be always available for your students, partners, collaborators, etc. In this sense scheduled time has become even more hectic and instantaneous, requiring online responses to external demands.

Scheduled time is both linear and cyclic in nature (see Kauppi and Toivonen, 2001). In the linear form scheduled time proceeds from a beginning to an end, entailing change and transformation. This makes it possible to anticipate that at some point in the future things will be different, as is manifest, for instance, in the case of one head of department. He complains that while acting as a head he has no opportunity to carry out his own research since tightly scheduled administrative duties take so much of his time. However, he considers this situation as a passing phase: 'I am in this position a couple of years, trying to sacrifice myself.' After this 'sacrifice' he sees a brighter future where he will have more autonomy in time management. Thus the linear conception of scheduled time enables the anticipation of change, which provides comfort in the present situation.

By contrast, in the cyclic view of scheduled time the same things are encountered again and again. For example, a huge pile of students' essays arrives regularly once a month on the desk or the same procedure of 'project rat race' goes on and on although individual projects change. This perspective offers a rather pessimistic and anxious vision of the future, as there seems to be no escape from the current time constraints. Instead, the same phases of the work are seen to recur and the present is believed to continue basically unchanged in the future:

> If, after the doctoral dissertation, there is only really hectic project research one project after another, then it really is a rather killing prospect. I mean, the development stops there and turns into decline.

The most striking form of scheduled time in our data is the external time control that is used in some externally funded project teams. These project researchers keep a record of every half hour and document what they have been doing during that time. This is said to be done for the sake of invoicing so that the researchers are able to demonstrate to the funding bodies how they have utilized their time, thus legitimizing their salaries. On the other hand through repeatedly reminding researchers of the passing of time and of the importance of making

the most of it, this kind of time control is also used as a self-disciplinary aid to strengthen working efforts and the sense of accountability.

All in all, scheduled time makes academics constantly aware of and dependent on the passing of time: often both minute-to-minute clock-time (meetings, seminars, negotiations, etc.) as well as larger-scale temporal units (deadlines for applications, articles, projects, etc.). Although schedules themselves can be regarded as necessary in organizing any work, the penetrating nature of scheduled time seems to be an acute problem in academic work. Academics feel that due to the increasing pressure of scheduled time, they have lost control over time management and have less and less autonomy in their work. As a result, scheduled time tends to come into conflict with academics' wish to gain flexibility and freedom over their use of time, in particular with their attempt to have more time for their own research.

To solve this conflict, time is treated as a sort of commodity that can be 'bought', 'stolen', 'saved' and 'borrowed'. One project researcher, for example, explains the practices of his team in the following way: 'One solution is that (. . .) we do the projects so damned effectively that we manage to get time for ourselves.' In other words, these researchers work extremely hard to get the projects finished earlier than promised for the funding bodies in order to achieve free time for furthering their own research interest for the rest of the project time. Another project researcher speaks about 'stealing time': 'At present I am in such a situation that I'm stealing time, I suppose one month for my dissertation, from the project where I am working. But it will be paid back sometime in the future.' These quotes illustrate that academics regard scheduled time mainly as an external constraint and try hard, in one way or another, to attain and preserve even a little bit of autonomy in time management.

Timeless Time

In sharp contrast to scheduled time, timeless time is not subjected to any kinds of external pressures and demands. In our terminology, it refers to internally motivated use of time in which clock time loses its significance. In this sense timeless time involves transcending time and one's self and becoming entirely immersed in the task at hand. Whereas in scheduled time long working hours are a result of externally imposed necessities, in timeless time they stem from academics' own enthusiasm, fascination and immersion in their work.

In our data this time perspective is devoted to academic research, especially to reading, writing, thinking and having intellectual discussions in peace and quiet. Based on autonomy and freedom, academic research is characterized as being carried out beyond all mundane concerns and temporal limitations:

> This is really the only environment where I have ever felt at home. Maybe I am basically such a person who does research. Really stereotypical. I sit here enthusiastically, eyes crossed still at the fourteenth hour of the working day. I just cannot remember to go to eat or to go home. Sometimes I wonder whether such a stereotypical person can even exist. (. . .) I regard myself as privileged in the sense that I am doing such work, I mean when I do research that I really like.

According to this time perspective, research work requires personal commitment, deep dedication and long-term concentration. It is said to be different from many other types of work: 'Brains are a target of hard exercise and it needs time. (. . .) It is different from digging a ditch, you just take a spade, everyone can do it somehow. But in this that is not the case, it quickly goes all wrong.' As a consequence, research work cannot be subjected to strict deadlines or tight schedules: 'It is impossible to do research in periods of a couple of hours between two meetings.' Instead, true research takes – and must be allowed to take – all the time it needs, as in the following case: 'I begin to understand only now what it is all about, after 14 years.' Even if confronted with temporal expectations and pressures, academics try to hold on to the notion of timeless time:

> My aim is to handle this theoretical problem on a very personal level. I have not surrendered to producing the right kinds of results quickly but I have wanted to do everything fundamentally.

What is prominent in the accounts of the interviewed academics is that timeless time is principally referred to as an ideal, not something really occurring in everyday practices. Faced with the demands of scheduled time, academics only very rarely enjoy the luxury of timeless time in their own work. However, in our data there is a variety of positions that academics have in this regard.

First, there are a few academics who work in exceptionally fortunate conditions without severe external time constraints. For them, timeless time is real present time characterizing the nature of their work. For example, one researcher describes his current working situation quite in line with the timeless time perspective:

> I have always thought that you must have fun at work. (. . .) At the moment my situation is such that I do not actually produce anything much for the time being. (. . .) As a matter of fact I work really differently from ever before and in particular, I concentrate in peace here. (. . .) This is a little bit like a monastery, a place to work peacefully and to concentrate.

Second, there are those who succeed in making special arrangements, such as getting sabbatical leaves and research grants, to gain timeless time. It is striking that in these cases having timeless time requires an escape from the home department – you have either to stay at home or to go abroad in order to break away from the firm grip of the scheduled time prevailing at the department. One

academic gives advice: 'The best would be to stay away from here, somewhere really away.' Another academic has succeeded in this: 'I absolutely have to do something. Now I am going to America for three months and if I manage to get my lectures ready here, then I hope that I will be able to write a little bit there.' Thus for these academics, timeless time is real time during some, usually quite short, period during which they are able to immerse themselves without external constraints in the basics of academic work, such as reading and writing.

For the rest the working situation is not so pleasant. There are many for whom timeless time is a wish, a plan and an aim. These academics currently work under severe time pressure, but they hope that after finishing their present workload they will have an opportunity to withdraw to timeless time and to concentrate in peace on their own research. In other words, timeless time is believed to come true in a near future, as in the following quotes: 'I have to hope that in the spring I will find time' and 'I am living in hope that I can continue with this next spring.' And if this does not succeed in the spring, then, so the logic goes, in the summer, in the autumn at the latest. Achieving it requires not only hard work but also good organizing and planning – and a bit of luck. Thus in this case timeless time belongs to the sphere of the anticipated future, which as a norm lies within a range from half a year to one and a half years.

There are others for whom timeless time belongs to the irreversible past. Relying on nostalgic memories, these academics recount the lost golden age when they had an opportunity to devote themselves to research:

> Two, three years I only did my dissertation, I was able to work on it in utter peace. I still sometimes wonder about that. I mean in the years 91, 92, 93 I only worked on that. (. . .) I was really allowed to do it in peace. (. . .) I did not have any responsibilities or thesis supervision, nothing of that sort.

Contrary to those who are waiting to acquire timeless time in the future, these academics have no such aspirations. They regard the present as radically disconnected from the past, thereby entailing no possibilities to experience timeless time, not at least in the foreseeable future. According to them, their current work situation requires adjusting to external demands, but the memories of the good old days may, however, provide consolation and strength amid hectic schedules.

Finally, some academics refer to timeless time as an ideal that they will never reach. They have neither nostalgic memories nor future hopes of being able to become absorbed in research without tight external time constraints. Instead, after reflecting on their work situation realistically, they conclude that in practice they cannot afford that kind of luxury themselves. Yet, they appreciate timeless time as a crucial value in academic work and express their commitment to it. In the case of the following researcher, for example, timeless time belongs to the better world 'hereafter', not to the mundane world of hard realities:

> This is not at all in balance. I am a researcher to my very soul so that I would really hope to find essentially more time for it. But within these structures in which we are working, that belongs to the utopian world.

There are also a few academics in our interview material who do not refer to timeless time at all. They have a strong identity as project researchers without any academic aspirations, such as doctorates, scientific publications or university posts. Instead, they focus on market-oriented practices and values such as attracting large amounts of external money, making good contracts, achieving and sustaining a reputation among funding bodies, etc. For them timeless time is not relevant in any of the senses mentioned above. The number of these academics, however, is extremely small. Thus for the majority of academics, timeless time is the fundamental time perspective in their work. It provides the basic rationale and personal meaning in academic work, even as a dream and an ideal never to be realized.

Contracted Time

The third time perspective in academic work is called contracted time. Its main feature is a sense of time as something that is terminating combined with an uncertainty about the future. The orientation is towards the end of the present contract (how much time do I have left?), and a worry about the future (how/when/where do I get the next contract?). In Finnish universities this kind of fixed-period time is the most common form of employment. Apart from the few with tenure (most often professors), the vast majority are employed on fixed-term contracts. Some work as project researchers funded through external resources, some as researcher-lecturers with fixed-period posts, and others as their acting substitutes when the incumbents of tenured posts manage to get research grants. The duration of these periods of employment ranges from a few weeks up to five years, two years being the average. More than half have a contract for not more than one year (Puhakka and Rautopuro, 2001). Thus, academic employment in Finland proceeds mostly from one contract to the next.

In our interview material the terminal and periodic nature of time is repeatedly expressed in the accounts of the academics' daily work. Younger people, who may have substantial student and housing loans, feel that this kind of employment is especially risky, when the breaks are constantly there:

> My situation is secured until the end of next year [18 months ahead], which is the first time during my career, but for example the members of my project group have only until the end of September [4 months ahead]. I feel somehow responsible for them and the milk bottles of their families' children. That is, I try to figure out where to get money then. (. . .) Sure, when facing these situations when you don't know if you will get paid next month, it surely is a strain.

From an individual researcher's point of view contracted time means several challenges and a lot of distress. This is evident in the following quote: 'Being kept in uncertainty like this, then, forces you into a continuous struggle, (. . .) it has indeed been really a grind.' Being constantly alert to the terminative present and the unknown future makes long-term planning difficult. Working through contracted time entails that an academic has to demonstrate her or his competence again and again in order to secure the next contract. Consequently, the present easily turns into short-term survival, from which continuity and security can be regarded as luxury. The contract-timers' functioning is constantly under surveillance, while their work is repeatedly evaluated after each terminating contract:

> I have felt it as far back as from the mid 80's that you have been a kind of entrepreneur in the sense that you are accountable for results while working in tiny bits of time. If you can't leave your mark, if you can't clearly show results, you are quickly out of these circles.

Besides striving to do your best within your present time available, you constantly have to try to legitimate your worth to the funding bodies, as a project manager explains his way of working:

> In our team (. . .) we all work in bits (. . .) one project at a time. (. . .) Generally we do it by cutting the contract temporally. (. . .) A one year contract (. . .) is due every three months (. . .) and after evaluation according to mutually agreed indicators we either continue or not. This is the mode. It's like on and off.

Consequently, constantly having an eye on the next possible contract, the research work might easily be attuned towards the interests of the funding bodies and/or latest fashions in your field. To be able to continue with their work, many have to apply for just about anything on the academic labour market. In one of the units the head of department characterizes the terms of employment in the following way:

> Everyone takes care of one's own finance. (. . .) If you succeed you get better pay, (. . .) if you fail you don't get any pay. (. . .) Your last won tender determines the protection against unemployment, nothing else. When you lose four tenders in a row, you have no job.

Only when looking back on your work history might it seem a continuous one. For most, living in the present is just as terminal as the following researcher describes it:

> You constantly think about where the next funding will come from, what kind of an application you have to write, attending meetings accordingly, writing, proof-reading, etc. I wouldn't be surprised if it were well over 10 per cent of my working hours and at least 20 per cent of my mental capacity that goes only into applying for funding.

In addition to the individually experienced distress, contracted time also poses several challenges at the unit level. Besides few permanent posts the academic units are composed of a blend of senior and junior vacancies with various duration and forms (open, temporary, pegged, suppressed or part-time posts). Quite a few of the academics apply regularly once or twice a year for a renewal of their contracts. Accompanied by a growing number of project researchers working on external funding the dominating time perspectives in an academic unit are temporary, episodic and contracted. Consequently, nobody seems to know exactly who is holding what position and for how long, who will be (t)here during the next semester and who is in or out of the unit at a given time.

> These stand-in posts go round and round so that they are often filled through multiple chains so that you substitute sometimes this one and sometimes that one. Everyone substitutes in some post. I have never figured out who holds a permanent post or, for example, a five-year post. Generally you just act as a substitute.

From the position of a department head contracted time is characterized by severe challenges. Employing people and organizing funding through grants and other project funding is characterized as 'quite a rumba' or as 'a jig-saw puzzle'. It involves difficult choices between individual employees: 'Sure, these recruitment decisions are important and there is this jig-saw puzzle to think about. When people have contracts until some day, there is always this worry over getting an extension for everyone.' Good or bad timing and luck are frequently referred to when considering the outcomes of these processes.

All in all, the contracted time perspective in academic work entails putting up with uncertainty, risk taking and confidence that in the end something will turn up. If not, the situation may be intolerable at both the individual and the unit level.

Personal Time

Personal time comes to the fore when academics reflect on their lives as a whole and the role of work in them. The basis of this time perspective is grounded in the inescapable finitude of human existence – in the cycle of birth and death. This perspective raises questions like how to use your lifetime, how to combine work and other areas of life such as family, and ultimately, how to live a good life.

In our interviewees' accounts personal time appears mainly in the negative form. It is referred to as something that is lacking and constantly at risk of being excluded. Several academics talk about their present situation as if living in a rat race out of which it is very hard to step. This is manifest, for instance, in the following quote from one professor who notices his awkward presence in front

of his PC: 'So, in front of a gadget like this I spend the best years of my life [laughter]. (. . .) I mean, I am not quite satisfied with this situation. It is difficult to jump out of it.' In a similar tone a department head states: 'I don't have any passion for running any faster any more. I have not had it for years.' The pressing question for these academics seems to be what they actually want from their work and life in general – before it is too late. Faced with this sort of question, working within academia turns out every now and then to be questionable:

> Sometimes you surely ask yourself whether you really want this, I mean, there must also be some other life than this. (. . .) After these undertakings at sight I really have to think seriously how I actually want to spend my mature middle age.

References to personal time are particularly numerous when academics ponder on their use of time from the viewpoint of their own health and the well-being of their families. This is apparent, for instance, in the following statement of a middle-aged professor:

> During the last few years I have sure had such working continuums that I wonder whether my health will stand it. When your summer holidays and Christmas leave and weekends and evenings go by and you have no time for your family and your children complain and you have no time for yourself. It sure is quite a killer.

For most interviewees, the present life situation entails working long hours, 10–12 hours a day, often including weekends and holidays. Consequently, several academics' accounts of their perseverance and health are coloured with anxiety. One senior academic admits, 'I can't deny that this is quite a burden. It will soon bury me, it is such a big task.' A project researcher approaching her 50s says that: 'It's obvious that with years, an old person can't manage this work of doing project research. Even I (. . .) become terribly exhausted every now and then. (. . .) You just don't cope physically, or mentally.' Also, accounts of burnout seem familiar in just about every academic unit in our material.

Furthermore, combining work and family life is anything but easy. The present pace of academic work is often described as something that is suitable only for those who do not have young children. Several academics characterize their family life as 'having suffered a lot' or as being 'almost excluded from their life'. Family evenings are often described as a time for 'reading student papers' and 'trying to do at least some research', while other family members watch TV, for instance. In addition, the weekends might be spent in doing research, reading or preparing research applications or attending seminars and conferences. Consequently, many worry about their future and some say that they have to 'sacrifice' either their family or their work, and thus, risk their future either at home or within academia.

Only few academics differ from the general view in our material. Long working hours seem to suit some, like the following researcher, who states clearly

that 'I want to work 12 hours a day, but I also make it a rule that I don't let it go beyond that.' By contrast, some of the junior researchers are reluctant to work very long hours, even at the risk of their career. One junior academic, for instance, has adopted a 'nine to five' attitude towards doing research:

> Sure, I do research (. . .) because you get money for doing it, and you get your thesis. (. . .) I can't say that I would have any big scientific ambitions or that I would achieve anything big and remarkable some day and become a professor and so on.

Likewise, another junior researcher questions the traditional academic path and represents a kind of a silent resistance while considering an application for a five-year vacancy:

> When you look at those holding a post, they'll almost die for their duties. People are really taken to their limits. There is this problem, then, when you have a young child you don't want to work like 12 hours a day, stay away from home all the time. (. . .) The quality of life, however, means pretty much. (. . .) So, a bit shorter working hours would sure suit me at this stage.

To conclude, the personal time perspective captures academics' experiences of the relationship between time devoted to work and to other important aspects of their lives. Only some of the interviewees seem to have found a balance in which working does not dominate life; the majority struggle with it.

Dilemmas Between Time Perspectives

It can be concluded that the academics' accounts of their work are grounded on several time perspectives that structure their experiences and attach meaning to them. Temporal orders thus have an important – yet often neglected – role in the construction of experiences (cf. Adam, 1995; Nowotny, 1994). The four time perspectives we have discussed do not, of course, capture all variations and idiosyncrasies in academics' work-related time experiences. For instance, contracted time for six months ahead is attended by different sorts of subjective meanings depending on the entire life situation of a given academic. In any case, the four temporal perspectives encapsulate the core dimensions observed in our interview material.

A variety of temporal experiences raises a question about the relationship between them. In principle, the four time perspectives may be mutually supportive as schedules, for instance, may promote experiences of timeless time by organizing and providing rhythm to the work in which one is immersed. Likewise schedules, timelessness and contracts may be in harmony with one's personal time. However, in our interview material problems, tensions and

dilemmas among the four time perspectives are overwhelming. The typical work situation is such that under the pressure caused by scheduled time and the insecurity brought about by contracted time, academics strive to achieve even snatches of timeless time for academic research as well as to gain some balance in personal time. From these dimensions we draw several dilemmas that shape the everyday experiences of academic work in our interview material.

Time pressure versus self-fulfilment

The basic tension springs from the pervasive nature of scheduled time, which leads to intense time pressure and often, when not managing to meet all the requirements as well as one hopes, to feelings of guilt, anxiety and shame (cf. Mäntylä, 2000b). This tension is consistent with a large number of empirical investigations which all point to the same trend in academic work: the increase in workload, distress and external control, accompanied by diminishing autonomy, lacking time management, lower social status and lower salary (see Barry et al., 2001; Fisher, 1994; Kogan et al., 1994; Parker and Jary, 1995; Prichard and Willmott, 1997; Räsänen and Mäntylä, 2001; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Smith and Webster, 1997; Trowler, 1998; Ylijoki, forthcoming). On this basis it can be argued that academics in present-day universities live in 'temporal prisons' (Hochschild, 1997), experiencing a specific 'time screw' (Salmi, 1997) where every new temporal constraint tightens the grip of the screw.

The problematic nature of scheduled time is most apparent in the interviewees' complaints that time pressure has become so harsh that it prevents them from enjoying the timeless time devoted to their own research. The dilemma between scheduled time and timeless time triggers problems at the individual level, since for most academics living in timeless time forms the ideal of their work for which they strive. Due to this, the key question for academics seems to be how to create timeless time for dedicated research. The means to answer this question includes different kinds of special arrangements, such as avoiding administrative duties, learning to say no, organizing daily and weekly routines, applying for research grants and – if nothing else helps – longing and dreaming for sabbatical leaves and a brighter future.

On the other hand the tension between scheduled time and timeless time also poses problems with regard to the quality of research work. It has often been emphasized that timelessness and the accompanying experience of 'flow' are closely connected to creativity in work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Mainemelis, 2001). Mainemelis (2001: 559) traces two main obstacles that hinder experiencing timelessness: first, extreme workload and time pressure that evoke feelings of anxiety and distract the individual's attention from the task in hand to deadlines; and second, interruptions that distract attention from the task. It is all too obvious that these impediments are among the basic characteristics of scheduled

time. Thus it could be concluded that the increasing pressure of scheduled time prevents academics from realizing their full creative potential in their research work. This obviously also impairs the quality of research.

Worse yet, both scheduled time and timeless time easily conflict with the personal time perspective. Either because of imposed schedules or because of their own immersion in research, the academics interviewed often complain that they neglect other aspects of their lives. The situation is complex, however. Although academics say that they long for more balanced personal time, they make hardly any protest or resistance against their current work situation. On the contrary, it seems that many of them would eagerly use every extra hour for their own research. In this sense timeless time and personal time have an ambiguous relationship. On the one hand they stand almost in opposition to each other as absorption in timeless time assumes an all too prominent role in academics' lives. On the other hand they are treated almost as equals since time-less time means something very personal, intimate and valuable for academics. In this respect academics can be regarded as 'time-thieves' (Hochschild, 1997) who steal time from the personal time – from evenings, nights, weekends and holidays.

This puzzling phenomenon can be seen as a manifestation of the 'long hours culture' (Rutherford, 2001). Rutherford (2001) offers various interpretations of this. Long hours culture can be regarded as a result of continuously increasing workloads so that individuals have no option but to work more and more in order to manage all the duties demanded of them. Long working hours can also be regarded as a cultural expectation, which indicates commitment and loyalty to the workplace. Irrespective of whether the work really demands working so much, long hours in themselves are treated as a sign that one is 'a serious player' (Hochschild, 1997) who strives forward ambitiously along the career path. In this sense it is also a competitive edge by which an individual is able to gain visibility and a good reputation. Conversely, without this kind of temporal commitment one is in danger of being defined as a loser. Moreover, the long hours culture can also be seen as springing from individuals' own inherent motivation and interest – they are so immersed and enthusiastic in their work that they just cannot stop working, even at the expense of feeling guilty about family responsibilities, for example.

All of these interpretations seem relevant with regard to our data. Timeless time reveals academics' internal motivation and their own willingness to devote time to research not only during working hours but also in the evenings, at weekends and on holidays. Cultural expectations surely have a role to play, too. Although it remains an open question as to what extent the pressure of the scheduled time derives from cultural norms or from an actual increase in work-load, it might be suggested that in a strongly competitive environment such as academia it is of the utmost importance for academics to build a reputation as

committed 'true researchers' (cf. Wager, 2001). One strategy to accomplish this is to work long hours and present oneself as an extremely busy person. Yet, it is obvious in our data that the scope of this interpretation is limited. Rather, the interviews show that the amount, the quality requirements and the pace of work have increased in recent years, and for this reason academics have to work harder and harder, longer and longer in order to survive in the academic game.

Short-term contracts versus long-term commitment

Contracted time creates extra tensions in the lives of academics (cf. Hey, 2001). In particular, it poses problems for long-term commitment to academic work, as the temporal horizon in contracted time is usually quite short. From an individual's point of view, it is doubtful whether there is any sense in becoming deeply attached to one's work and identifying with it if there is a real threat of unemployment in the near future. When the head of department cannot promise you anything for a longer period, avoiding all administrative duties and protecting your own interests seems the wisest thing to do.

On the unit level episodic labour also creates unnecessary turnover in the performance of the staff. Any kind of long-term development, job design, balancing of individual workloads, systematic training or attempts to renew academic practices is troublesome when the basis of employment is temporary. A lot of energy will be spent on supervising newcomers into their temporary posts, when the predecessor got a new contract or funding from elsewhere. Yet, from the viewpoint of the higher education system, it would be crucial to have committed staff who not only work hard but also engage in it willingly, with responsibility, and who are also able to engage in long-term planning and in the development of their academic units.

Two groups of academics confront this dilemma particularly clearly. First, young academics early in their careers find it difficult to commit their future to academia when the prospects of employment and career advancement are very insecure. Their situation corresponds to the characterization of working life in the new capitalism given by Sennett (1998: 89): 'Under these conditions, a kind of extreme risk-taking takes form in which large numbers of young people gamble that they will be one of the chosen few.' However, if a growing number of junior academics decide not to take part in the university gamble when they see better career opportunities elsewhere, it means severe threats to the social reproduction of the academic workforce.

The second group consists of those academics who, after spending several years or decades in academia, still actually have alternatives. In several fields, as in the humanities and social sciences, this is often not the case. By contrast, in the field of technology, for instance, the pull of industry is strong, especially in times of economic upswing. If the university offers only short-term contracts,

these academics are able to move into industry, where job security, career prospects and salaries are seen to be much better. Although the decision to leave academia is wholly rational from the individual's point of view, for the institution it creates severe problems in guaranteeing the continuity and quality of work.

The dilemma between short-term contracts and long-term commitment is a manifestation of a larger tension between individual rationality and common good. As Sennett (1998: 24) has claimed, 'no long term is a principle which corrodes trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment'. In circumstances of job insecurity, changing projects and fierce competition for contracts, grants and tenured posts, it seems that institutional loyalty, collective interests and long-term purposes are not necessarily compatible with individuals' immediate interests and personal goals.

This dilemma is apparent, for instance, in the academics' complaints concerning the lack of time to share with one's colleagues. On the one hand many of the academics state that they long for common time to hold lively discussions and share information as well as for reading and commenting on each others' work. Yet, on the other hand, they remark that in practice they do not have time for advancing this sort of collective good, since they are so strained to meet their deadlines, to ensure new contracts and to qualify on the academic labour market. As a result, there are very few moments available for shared time. In our material this is illustrated by the fact that several experiments to create shared time within the units – such as weekly departmental meetings, information coffee sessions and senior meetings – as a norm have gradually faded away. The key question is, then, how can long-term purposes and collective interests be furthered in an increasingly short-term, competitive academia? (cf. Sennett, 1998).

University management versus everyday realities

What makes the dilemmas related to time perspectives even more acute is that the everyday realities of our interviewees tend to be incompatible with the temporal order of the official university management. In management time is mainly treated as a uniform, unidirectional, absolute, divisible and independently measurable entity (McGrath, 1988), which is related to productivity: for instance, efficiency is evaluated against the time it takes to accomplish a given amount of work (Bluedorn and Denhardt, 1988). Hence, according to the logic of management, time represents a problem of allocation (Hellström and Hellström, 2002) and time is almost literally treated as a form of money that can be measured, counted and divided into units (Adam et al., 2002).

Correspondingly, the university is managed with the help of various kinds of regulations, rules, plans, assessments, questionnaires and settlements that

impose official temporal steering on academic work. The academics' everyday work has to be transformed into quantifiable measures and results irrespective of the internal rhythms of the work itself.

This rigid temporal order seldom matches with the academics' everyday realities at the department and unit levels, where academic work is characterized by the continuous reconciliation and struggle between different times. Difficulties arise when the invariable measure is imposed as the norm on highly context-dependent, rhythmic and variable situations and processes (Adam et al., 2002). From the academics' standpoint this creates extra tensions, since they have to translate the demands of the university management so that the institutional requirements are fulfilled sufficiently but are also manageable for themselves. In this sense the academics have to live in both the formal, linear-quantitative concept of time (Hassard, 1989) and the diverse, conflicting, even chaotic times of daily organizational life.

The annual plan of action provided for the university management as a part of the management by results procedure offers an illustrative example of these collective rituals that academics must perform regularly. In order to survive in a competitive academia each unit must have excellent plans and remarkable results. Consequently, the academics have to invest considerable time and effort in transforming the everyday realities into an annual plan of action, while at the same time many of the interviewees have serious doubts over the outcome of this annual ritual. The meaning and credibility of this temporal transformation was often questioned, confronted, avoided or even denied. None of the interviewees mention any real advantage or delight resulting from the procedure. On the contrary, it seems like an alienating, inauthentic practice (Ball, 1999), which evokes a growing sense of separation between work and personal identity, an experience of a loss of control over many aspects of teaching, learning and research (cf. De Groot, 1997). In addition, performing such temporal transformation rituals also constitutes an additional strain on the already tight scheduled time.

Final Remarks

Our study highlights the importance of temporal orders in understanding and making sense of individuals' experiences in the organizational context. It shows that members of an organization such as academia orient their daily work through distinct but yet intertwined time perspectives. It can be argued that the conflicts in temporal perspectives discerned in this study are closely linked to the profound changes that have been taking place over recent years at the macro level of the higher education system, manifest, for instance, in the concepts of the 'new public management' (e.g. Hood, 1995), 'academic capitalism'

(Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), 'post-academic science' (Ziman, 1996) and 'entrepreneurial university' (Clark, 1998). As Jahoda (1988: 168) emphasizes, 'social change has a speed, rhythm and rate of its own, uncoordinated to individual change experiences and yet influencing them deeply'. This notion applies well to academia. The higher education system as a whole has changed rapidly, for instance, with regard to management and funding. At the departmental and individual levels the change processes have not followed the same speed and pace, thus creating dilemmas between different time perspectives and evoking severe tensions in academic work.

All in all, our exploration into the temporal orders of academic work has created a rather gloomy picture of the everyday realities in academia. The academics seem to be left with few options available to live a temporally balanced academic life. Time pressure is not only a negative thing and a source of stress; in optimal form it can contribute to efficient performance without human cost (Freedman and Edwards, 1988: 132). In present-day academia it seems, however, that this optimal level has been surpassed. Conditions like living in 'temporal prisons', experiencing work as an ever tightening 'time screw' and 'stealing time' from oneself and one's family are manifestations of the academics' everyday realities in which the temporal perspectives are seriously asynchronous.

It is therefore crucial to reflect critically on the future of academic work. We agree with Levine (1988: 58) that it is an admirable goal to learn 'how to be hardworking without being hard driving and competitive' and that 'self-destructiveness is not a necessary byproduct of productivity'. The key question arising from our study, then, is how to develop academic practices so that they allow a more balanced coexistence of the various temporal orders and, particularly, minimize the negative consequences of the pervasiveness of scheduled time and the insecurity of contracted time. These questions are acute not only in the university context but represent general concerns in the late-modern world (cf. Eriksen, 2001; Sennett, 1998). Hochschild (1997) has called for a collective time movement to strive to change the current situation in working life. In our opinion this call applies well to universities. While time is primarily a social construction, what can we do, individually and collectively, to integrate the variety of multiple times to allow us more space for timeless time, flexibility in schedules, security in employment, and balance in our personal time?

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Hope and despair in academic work

Hans Mäntylä & Hanna Päiviö

"Hope is to yield into the stream of time, whereas despair is to remain at its shore." These words, written by Martti Lindqvist (2004, 7), are challenging for academics as well as for researchers exploring academic work. The working days of university researchers and teachers are colored by very conflicting stories about the purposes and goals of academic work. Academe seems to be in the middle of a discursive transition of values, in which traditional ideals of academic work – autonomy, freedom and critical education – are being adapted to conditions imposed by the global market economy. Academics are directed increasingly away from the values of collective caring and welfare towards individuality and advancement of their own interests (cf. Filander 2000). For a university researcher and teacher this means the acceptance of profitability, efficiency and result-oriented accountability as the central basis of one's work (Slaughter & Leslie 1997).

In higher education research, the university is characterized as an institution that is facing complex, discontinuous and difficult to manage changes (see e.g. Taylor 1999). The growing importance of a market orientation, efficiency and accountability means also that academics are increasingly becoming instrumental paid labor. The aim is to manage, control, price and increase the efficiency of their contribution with the help of imported corporate models and full-time managers.

The results of academic work are ever more vigorously redefined

outside the scientific community and work is evaluated according to how it serves corporate and industrial competitiveness (Rhoades 1998; Dearlove 1998). In teaching this means, for example, efficient management of growing masses of students and designing both the teaching methods and the content of the curriculum in accordance with the needs and interests of business. In research work, scientific criteria are supplemented with demands for application, commercial utility and the ability to offer solutions to various technical and industrial problems. Hence, academics become "accountable" to their financiers. (see Hakala et al. 2003)

All aspects of academic work are subject to frenetic 'development', while the university management seeks innovative 'top performance' within research work, teaching, professional services, and public discourse as well as within the administration (Rhoades 2000). The faculty is expected to keep on improving their results and their performance in all of these tasks. From the perspective of researchers and teachers working in disciplinary units, this is problematic, because the different fields of work form a bundle of diverse and intertwined tasks (see e.g. Kalleberg 2000), where all the tasks compete for the time and energy of the same group of people. Striving for excellence within one task at a time might be a reasonable challenge, but a change in one of the tasks inevitably affects the others too. Partial change and development attempts that are detached from the whole of academic work, such as renewal of curriculum, renewal of the salary system or development of student access only add the fragmentation of academic work.

Ideas and development efforts like these have gained strength particularly in the 1990s. Today, they narrow the diversity of academic work and create hierarchies between researchers and teachers working in different disciplinary units and cultures. The changes may suit some disciplines quite well and they may even facilitate the professional development of some researchers in exactly the directions they prefer. For others, however, this means a pressing struggle between conflicting

expectations, where researchers and teachers must constantly reinterpret the tasks in which they should take part and invest their efforts. Ever-increasing competition gnaws away at the foundation of mutual cooperation and trust, and within the jungle of short-term employment everyone is ultimately responsible only for oneself. Hence, it is difficult to find a coherent account of academic work that would support one's own understanding of 'good work' and a respective professional identity in a meaningful way. If "the stream of time" seems to both accelerate and flow in the wrong direction, the mere thought of yielding to it evokes conflicting experiences of fear, rage and despair.

The fear of being left on the shore, however, forces one to move – to look for alternatives, different vocabularies and perspectives for discussion of academic work and universities. In this article we want to distance ourselves from strivings that aim at increasing the efficiency of academic work but do not support working in disciplinary units, understandings of good work or the autonomous development of one's work. Instead, we will focus on what enables academics – not only to cope and endure – but also to become enthusiastic, inspired and experience their work as worthy of doing. We focus on the academics' every-day work, and particularly, what nourishes academics' life and what they cherish in their work (cf. Gergen 2003). Accordingly, we want to break away from research that reproduces only gloomy images and prospects.

In this article we ask what makes academic work good, meaningful and worth striving for. We seek features, characteristics and perspectives that sustain the hopes of academics for good work. Our research material comprises the short written stories of 21 academics on their work. In these stories the academics describe positive events and experiences regarding their work. On the basis of these stories we have constructed a narrative that describes what good academic work could be like. By reading and analyzing our story from the perspective of hope, we identify some central features of good academic work and interpret good work from the tension between hope and despair. By discussing

the meaning of hope in academic work we seek a better understanding of its nature and open up fresh perspectives on the struggle for meaningful work in an absurd working environment.

How to conceive 'hope' in academic work

Hope and despair have traditionally been studied by philosophers, theologians, and psychologists. In these traditions hope, has been characterized as a fundamental characteristic of humanness, which is an indispensable source of energy for collective action (Ludema et al. 1997; Ludema, 2001; Kylmä 1996). On the other hand, despair and the absence of hope may be conceived as the denial of a virtue, as moral sloth or even as a mortal disease (Kierkegaard 1924). Hope is, however, not only an issue of the moral, spiritual or religious dimensions of which philosophers and theologians debate. In every-day life the issue of hope and despair deals with more than merely the beginning or the end of life. It deals with no less than "the meaning of life stretching out into tomorrow and its right to exist. The essence of hope is always the same, no matter which scene of life we are dealing with." (Lindqvist 2004, 13) Given that hope is so vital in our lives, it is remarkable that it has not been a center of attention in the social sciences, nor in organizational or higher education research.

The organization researchers James Ludema, Timothy Wilmot and Suresh Srivastva have made a broad review of hope literature (see Ludema et al. 1997). Their ideas about the concept of *organizational hope* also open up an interesting point of departure for our research. They propose that hope displays four enduring qualities that may all contribute to and enhance organizational vitality: (i) hope is born in relationships; (ii) it is inspired by the conviction that the future is open and can be influenced; (iii) it is sustained through moral dialogue; and (iv) it generates positive affect and action.

Ludema et al. (1997) call on organizational scholars to define research agendas and choose methods of inquiry that explore the hopes and aspirations of organizational members (ibid., 1015). According to them, "the purpose of social and organizational science ought to be to create *textured vocabularies of hope* […] that provide humanity with new guiding images of relational possibility" (ibid., 1016).

Vocabularies of hope come in many shapes and sizes: there are theories, ethnographies, case studies, vignettes, personal narratives, rhetorical speeches, and stories told in classrooms, meetings, or around the coffee table. These can be defined as linguistic constructions that create images of an array of relational possibilities. They open up fresh perspectives on the moral discussion of good work, and thus sustain the hope for a better future. Vocabularies of hope may also serve as linguistic tools that promote the (re)construction of relationships in ways that conform to collective images of the "good." In other words, discussing hope creates images of possibility that may enhance social and organizational vitality. (Ludema et al. 1997, 1021–1022)

Regarding hope, however, it is essential that despair may also be very real. Stories about hope and stories about despair are always told side by side and in turn. Both stories tell about each other and they are both connected to a longing state of being, in which things are still incomplete (Lindqvist 2004). This article also wells up from the tension between hope and despair in our daily work. David Halpin has also provided interesting examples of research on the tension between hope and despair (see Halpin 2001, 2003a, 2003b). He has written about the significance of hope, utopianism and imagination within the context of education, and discussed how hope may be put back into situations where it is under threat and close to vanishing from the scene. According to Halpin, we should take three things seriously, namely, hopelessness, the discussion of moral virtues, and optimistic illusions and utopias.

By taking hopelessness seriously, we may also appreciate critical accounts of the social malaise within higher education without viewing

them merely as complaints or as an inability to look on the bright side of academic work. Hopefulness entails a critically reflective attitude towards prevailing circumstances and consequently draws attention to a significant gap in how certain matters are experienced in the present. This discontent is often allied to a wish to change the situation for the better. In other words, lurking behind the professional narratives of academic decline, is a broad outline of some kind of a utopia about how academic work could be organized or 'managed' for the better. When working in dire and difficult circumstances academics can also help to sustain strength in their work by bringing the idea of the 'Good Life' back to mind. This again entails *taking the moral virtues of academic work seriously* and a continuous debate on what constitutes good academic work. The importance of *taking optimistic illusions and utopias seriously* is based on the idea that all utopias are important signifiers of hope. Their primary function is to distance us from immediate circumstances so that we can develop alternative views that point towards promotion of the 'good.' Being hopeful involves the belief that something 'good,' which does not presently apply to one's own life, or the life of others, could still materialize. (Halpin 2003a.)

Like bell hooks, who has studied education as a practice of freedom, writes (1994, 224): "University is not a paradise, but learning can serve as a space where the paradise can be created." This applies for hope, too. Even if the university might never become a paradise, hoping is the space where we create the good in our daily academic work. Thus, hope not only deals with our dreams, utopias or naïve fantasies, but with the different meanings of academic work and sources of inspiration that are so easily lost in the daily grind. They can, however, also be found in every-day life – provided that we somehow create space for them.

In search of hope through non-active role playing

Tracing, reaching and identifying hope within the daily work of aca-
demics is not an easy task. In our previous studies on academic work
we have interviewed researchers, teachers, and university students (see
Mäntylä 2000; Räsänen & Mäntylä 2001; Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003;
Leppälä & Päiviö 2001). Instead of hope the interviewees' accounts
of their work and studies were dominated by heavy time pressure, new
demands and constraints, feelings of powerlessness and stress. While
working on this material we were constantly astonished by how the
academics and students found meaning in their daily work amid all the
problems, shortcomings and restrictions they experienced. It is much
easier to understand the claims of higher education researchers accord-
ing to which the university to which many academics once came to work
is reaching its end and collapsing into a bureaucratic enterprise bereft of
moral purpose (see e.g. Readings 1996). Rather than merely reproduc-
ing more accounts of the problems of academic work, we focus in this
article primarily on finding and exploring vocabularies of hope.

Talking and writing about enthusiasm, inspiration and hopes regard-
ing one's work is, however, difficult – even only reading a hopeful text
might evoke conflicting emotions of suspicion and contempt. Modesty
and humility seem to be virtues of high value among many researchers,
and getting enthusiastic or boasting about your attainments is not always
met with approval. Nonetheless, to overcome the problem-centered per-
spective and vocabulary, we decided to use the method of '*non-active
role playing*' (see Eskola 1998) in this study. We asked our colleagues
working within our disciplinary community to write short stories about
good experiences, events, images and hopes regarding their work. We
provided our colleagues with a written instruction about the writing of
the stories and asked them to enter into the situation described in the
instruction. Using their imagination, the respondents either extend the
situation into the future or describe what must or may have happened
before the situation or event. Thus, stories generated with non-active
role-playing are descriptions of possible realities: stories about what

can happen and about the meaning of different things for their authors. (ibid.)

When hope is understood as a continuous act of (re)imagining the future, we think that the method of non-active role-playing suits the exploration of vocabularies of hope well. Hope is inspired by the conviction that the future is open and becoming, rather than closed or fixed in a deterministic way. Being hopeful also involves the belief that something good, which may not apply in the present situation, can still materialize. By cultivating one's imagination we may also move, at least temporarily, beyond the particular constraints that seem to deprive us of life's fullness. This allows us to transcend the present situation, change perspectives, and construct more creative future prospects. As a response to the fundamental openness of the future we do not have to take adversity as the only basis of hope; it can in fact thrive under all conditions (Halpin 2003a; Ludema et al. 1997).

Building on these dimensions of hope we constructed the following orientation for our respondents engaged in academic work:

It is the year 2009. A warm, late-summer Friday evening, in Helsinki. The subject unit of Organization and Management will be 40 years old this year and is celebrating with a party at the festival hall in Seurasaari. The whole disciplinary community has been invited to the party and you are also attending. The tables are set and you see life around you; lived, experienced and shared in various ways. After the banquet and the speeches we continue the night by fires outside. While celebrating a special day it feels natural to look back on significant events of past years, share experiences related to work and maybe also dream about the future together. The stories, hopes and recognitions you hear touch you in many ways. Important events and experiences of your work cross your mind. You become absorbed in your thoughts for a while…

Enter into this moment and write a story about one of the good events or experiences that cross your mind.

The orientation was constructed with the assumption that the elements enclosed offer plenty of opportunities to write about significant and good experiences in academic work. The situation described in the orientation included some realistic features: the subject unit of Organization and Management will turn 40 in 2009 and it is likely that some kind of festive occasion will be arranged then. In a situation like this, it is also often customary to look back on times past. Transferring the situation described in the orientation five years into the future also provided the participants with an opportunity to transcend their present situation and to write about possible future images and experiences, which may be yearned for. We did not, however, want to constrain the participants to write only about future images, and thus, we left the instructions open in this regard: good events or experiences were not restricted to any particular point in time. The openness of the situation was also maintained by talking deliberately about the "whole disciplinary community" into which all the participants could take part as they wanted to.

The orientation was presented to 24 academics (13 female, 11 male), working in different faculty positions and disciplines in the Helsinki School of Economics in spring 2004. All participants involved were told that we were exploring positive features of academic work and that we were interested in hopes regarding their work. We introduced the written orientation and asked the participants to write their story immediately. Most of them returned their stories by e-mail within a few hours, some a few days later. Altogether, we received 21 stories.

On the basis of these personal stories we constructed one narrative on academic work and titled it "Academic work as a source of inspiration and meaning." Our focus was not to analyze and categorize the participants' stories as such, but rather to combine separate elements of the various stories and to reconstruct one narrative that describes academic work as a whole. This narrative perspective is based on the idea that narratives constitute a fundamental form of human understanding through which individuals make sense of themselves and of their lives (see e.g. Hänninen 1999). Narratives make individual events and phenomena comprehensible by providing a meaningful whole, a plot, to

which they contribute. They impart meaning to distinct experiences and thereby also provide moral grounds on the basis of which individuals are able to orient themselves in their lives (ibid.).

Our narrative, which describes valuable and inspiring features of academic work, is thus constructed with the help of elements from the 21 stories, about which the academics working in the community of Organization and Management wrote to us. Belonging to this community did not mean that all the academics worked in the community on a daily basis. Some have a permanent position in the community, some have fixed-term contracts or work as substitutes, while others participate only through various individual and temporary projects. Thus, all the stories we received are attached to the local culture and they form a frame through which we have read and analyzed them.

The personal stories written by academics working in different positions and tasks were confusingly diverse, conflicting, and even contradictory. In some stories the participants wrote about events and experiences that had actually happened. About half of the stories were written about events and experiences that the authors imagined, hoped or feared would happen within the coming five years that were framed in our orientation. The chronologies in the other stories were more diverse and they contained elements of several tenses.

The narrative we have constructed contains elements of nearly all of the participants' stories, but does not revert to any single story as such. In our narrative we construct a meaningful whole for the separate events and experiences by combining various elements in the participants' personal stories. We integrate their tenses and place them into one working day. The content of our narrative rests on experiences, discussions and recollections of a fictive protagonist and his colleagues. Even if we focus particularly on those features that our research participants regarded as positive, valuable and worth striving for, we have also tried to respect the contradictions and tensions within the stories. "Academic work as a source of inspiration and meaning" is thus a narrative that describes what academic work could be like from the perspective of academics working within a disciplinary unit.

Academic work as a source of inspiration and meaning

Timo's working week is beginning at the Department of Management, where he has worked as a researcher, teacher and doctoral student for years. While turning on his PC, Timo looks back on how he became a researcher – how he had grown together with this special set of people. "During the first year I learned that I knew virtually nothing. Working in the research project run by Milla taught me humility above all. I notice that I still think in the same way, and I doubt the possibility of knowing. This research community is held together by a kind of secret confession – laughter that is liberating and kind. Humility, modesty and laughing at oneself are matters that this community supports. In our community you don't leave friends behind and good moments involve becoming equal. Every instance in which minor disagreements or surprising congruities in thinking have turned a former authority into a research colleague have been impressive."

While drinking his morning coffee, Timo thinks over the coming week. The lectures of the "Major Issues of Management" course are over and a discussion with the other teacher, Susanne, was set for this week: going through student essays, giving feedback, evaluation and refocusing the course for the next term. "I'm content with the teaching work done as well as with the chance to direct my time more freely to reading, writing and other things that has been waiting their turn."

Last week there was also the publication of the book Timo and his colleagues had written. "The past few years have been good for our research group. I wonder if our chances for a second research project will be equally good? We have enjoyed long-term funding that has rendered writing a joint book possible along with work on my own dissertation. We have also found a common style of writing in the group and the common cause has been more important than individual goals. We have not evaluated nor challenged one another, and no big fuss was made during the process. Nor did anyone stand up and declare our work "great stuff".

Instead we have just kept working with humility, in doubt and lost down bypaths every now and then. I have always put high demands on myself and I'm proud of our book, because I believe that it can reach a broader audience than academic readers alone. One can also laugh and question one's thinking with this interesting book. Together we have also opened new directions towards a society that would be more just and equal. After the birth of my child, I would not have believed that something else could feel as good as this."

While going through his e-mail, Timo's attention is attracted by a message concerning the curriculum reform that had taken a lot of work during the past few years. The next phase of this work was about to begin and the head of the department called all the researchers involved in teaching to a meeting. Through various working groups, seminars and workshops the previous phases of this work had now reached a point where a coherent profile had finally been found for the discipline, a profile that made it possible to release creativity. "Now we have a common approach and people who realize what they are best at," Timo thought. This had not been possible without the endeavor called "Harvesting & Winter Grain", in which the focus was on collating the expertise that had been accumulated in past years, closing the contacts, as well as sprouting and planting new grain. With the strength of the researchers in the community three books were compiled, which were published at the traditional summer seminars of the subject unit. Since then, this *Trilogy on Organization and Management* has been used regularly in teaching. Many people think that this also clarified the disciplinary profile for the students.

Now, a further phase in development of the courses that had already been taught in the curriculum for some years was about to begin. The new system of university administration that had been applied along with the reform was going to be evaluated on the department level. As a teacher in charge of two courses, Timo had participated actively in the planning of both the Bachelor's and the Master's degree in previous years. During the

past year he had, however, been able to withdraw from this work. Milla had promised to take up the development of teaching in turn, whereupon Timo finally got a chance to concentrate more clearly on his own writing and research work.

Last week Timo heard from Heikki what a miracle it was that the development process of the curriculum was managed with so little damage. "The changes would never have been accomplished if the faculty had not also realized the distress experienced by the administration of the university. Fortunately, there are people around who also understand our work. Support of that kind is essential for enduring this work. At times the fate of the whole discipline seemed to be at stake and some people were apparently about to pack their things." And some really found a place elsewhere, like Tommi, who had worked for years as a researcher and senior lecturer in the department. At times, Tommi's fate gnawed at Timo's mind. "It feels sad that I really don't belong here anymore," Tommi had said. "I gave up my academic career some time ago. The constant stress, flu, arrhythmia and insomnia finally got the upper hand, and I was simply no longer up to it physically. At some point I just had to admit that I could not manage to keep my body and soul together from one project to the other, in a constant force play, anxiety and uncertainty."

Timo was gradually facing the end of a five-year long period of research funding and the annoyingly familiar uncertainty of his future was again coming to the fore. "Will I find myself, too, in the category of 'looser', dropped out of the academic race – lost? Anxiety arises when you remember all the situations in which you might have acted otherwise. Skip this and that interesting work, focus on the essential, act more efficiently and avoid political issues within the department… Or maybe not, after all?"

Nevertheless, the major challenge of the day and the whole week was to switch from the teaching of recent weeks back to research. Timo thought that he might attend the upcoming development meeting, if he made a good start on his research. A cold sweat faded away when Timo's

thoughts reverted to the research seminar on the meaning of doing re-
search in your own work that was arranged last month. "Doing research
has gradually become more real for me and being a researcher has become
an important part of my identity. Working on my dissertation along with
all the other duties has organized my work in recent years. I have got a
direction to strive towards – a clear goal and justification for my work.
Despite the upcoming agony of the examination, it feels particularly good
that I have learnt to write in the way that I have sought to for many years.
My text evokes thoughts and challenges to interpret, and writing is cre-
ative and inspiring again. My confidence in my research competence also
grows when the work is fun. And since the work will soon be completed,
it would also feel good to receive recognition for the enormous effort."

　　"The most important thing in the whole dissertation process, however,
remains the people with whom I've worked and the experiences shared,"
Timo thought. "Even if I don't know yet where and how I can continue
with my research next year, it nevertheless feels particularly good that I
have gradually learnt to overcome my limits by being part of this strange
band. A publication contract or notification that an article has been ac-
cepted for publication are not the only peak moments for which this work
is pursued. They help you to cope from one stage to the next, but in order
to want to go on with this work you also have to see something rewarding
along the route through the foggy landscape."

　　The revision of Timo's dissertation is interrupted when the colleagues
next door invite him along for lunch, where the topics change quickly
from one to the other. Veikko, a senior researcher who had just recently
returned from a sabbatical leave, explained eagerly how an old student
friend had commented on his research work. "I really want to read your
upcoming article, too, they always force one to think," he had said. "It
felt really good, again, after a long time that my stuff had been read there,
too," Veikko rejoiced. "That my friend found a taste of life in my writing.
I have always dreaded research that excludes life. And that my work has
made one professional think, given him a new angle on reality. I've also

noticed that I talk about my work with pride," Veikko admitted, "and especially I've done it with the support and help of this community. Yes, not having to work in a community where words like NO and I dominate, and where other people exist only for competing or boosting some narcissistic EGO's, releases a lot of energy."

"Is it always so blissful around here?" wondered Vilma, who had only recently joined the research community, across the lunch table. "Aren't you supposed to compete with everyone, silently envy the achievements of others and suffer in the guilt and inadequacy caused by incomplete work and the impossible promises that have been given in an endless chain of applications?"

"You can get enough of that, too, and you don't last very long on it," replied Maire, one of the senior researchers in the Department. "It's much more interesting to be able to participate and live with the work, effort and learning of others. Searching for a meaningful 'thing of your own' and 'self' is touching when you are able to follow and try to support the efforts of others – provided that all the mental and social barriers to it are overcome, laughed down, one by one. At times it seems to be me who makes this even more difficult. Renewing your own routines and ways of coping demands courage from each of us. Often it also feels like I'm the one in the supervisory relationship who is less competent and somehow limited. At the same time I'm happy about the skill with which I am supervised and kept in the group. Especially when you learn to avoid the temptations of possible 'success' that emerge when you go along with an opinion or discourse that has been declared right and proper. This is why we have winners here, I think, whose rewards are not necessarily measured in terms of money."

"Well, there has been enough interesting work around, hasn't there. Even if things have felt so uncertain and difficult so many times," Timo continued. "And you can take part in a 'great adventure' without competition, technology, noise and fuss, too. You just retreat with the group somewhere and try to take the work of each of us one step ahead. Sure, it would be nice to have a somewhat more permanent job, but not exactly at any price."

"Having experiences from different universities and research communities also provides you with an opportunity to think without constantly having a noose around your neck," noted Meeri, a senior lecturer sitting besides Vilma. "I still sense some of the special characteristics that got me to stay with academic work and to return to this place in particular. Since then this community has grown a lot, but isn't there still space enough for younger researchers? Chances to join research projects are offered whenever available, and decisions can also be made differently than expected within the community – commanding, subordinating or submitting to somebody's will do not really fit in here, do they? Or what do you think, Timo?"

"Well, sure, but I also understand Vilma's amazement. I recall only too well how it feels to mull over your work when things don't get on or your applications are not accepted. All positive experiences and incidents, in principle, may turn out to be wrong choices or they may form chains of other incidents that are not good. It is difficult then to think about individual events or experiences apart from your entire career."

After lunch, Timo receives a research plan to read from Ville, a colleague of his who has only recently defended his thesis, and Timo promises to comment on it well before the application deadline. The writing on which he had made a start in the morning was about to be postponed until tomorrow …

Good academic work from the perspective of an academic

In the narrative above we have outlined good academic work through events and duties in the course of one fictive working day. The events and duties arise mainly from the personal stories of the participating academics, even if we have "arranged" Timo's day and the plot of the narrative partly on the basis of our own daily experiences of working in academia. Hence, the narrative is a description of an academic work-

ing day as we can or could experience it. Above all, it is an account of academic work in which space is provided for the images, experiences, and hopes of our research participants regarding good work.

With the help of this narrative, we can look for answers to the question of what makes academic work good, meaningful and worth striving for. By reading it in different ways we can find differing dimensions of good academic work, where the central features can even conflict with each other. Next, we will outline the different elements of good academic work by reading the narrative from three different perspectives: sustaining hope, the tension between hope and despair, and the struggle for meaning in absurd working conditions.

Sustaining hope

One way of considering the narrative is to read it from the perspective of sustaining hope. Then the narrative appears as an account of good academic work that enlivens and sustains hope. On the other hand, reviving and sustaining hope create space and opportunities for doing and experiencing good work. Thus, good work and hope feed and create each other. A hoping person turns towards something good and with the help of his/hers imagination, (s)he can see that the opportunities for her/his work may be broader than they seem. Imagination opens up both a positive orientation towards future life and creates space for hope.

When hope is not perceived mere as a characteristic of an individual, a skill or an emotion, but as a phenomenon that arises, grows and lives particularly within relations, the social nature of work within a community stands out as a central feature of good work. Good academic work is thus something that is experienced and done within relations. Hence, the encounters within various relations of co-operation in daily work become arenas for doing and experiencing good work as depicted in the narrative.

Hope, however, does not flourish in just any kind of encounters or relations. A primary theme (within hope literature) is that it is born, nurtured and sustained in relationships of mutuality, in which the value and

integrity of all persons are affirmed. In this sense, supportive, mutual relationships are a primary forum for both good work and hope. Often hope is inspired especially when one receives sustenance in a time of difficulty. It is also aroused when one is able to nurture another. Hoping, therefore, prospers to the extent that people place themselves in service to each other.

Instead of mutual competition, Timo and his colleagues in the narrative place themselves in service to each other in the various activities of academic work: within supervisory relations, while commenting on each other's research plans, manuscripts and articles, while taking part in a research group, and while producing joint publications for different purposes. As teachers they plan and take responsibility for certain courses in the common curriculum of the subject unit; they evaluate and develop their teaching work, and the appropriateness and position of the courses within the curriculum together with their colleagues. Through cooperative relationships within the subject unit, opportunities for more flexible assignments, turn taking, and timing of teaching and administrative duties open up to fit the particular working situations every now and then. Good work is thus determined within relationships of mutuality that have their space in all the tasks of academic work in the narrative. From this perspective, experiencing meaningful and good work entails taking part in the research community and its various tasks. Relationships of mutuality may help in managing broader entities of work, the feeling of being part of the working community, and they may decrease the experience of fragmentation in academic work.

Autonomy – freedom – partaking

Besides the social and communal nature of university work, the narrative also conveys other central features of good work, which can be attached to traditional types of individualistic heroes within the academy (see Ylijoki 2002). Timo's work is guided by features such as the

challenge of autonomous and original thinking and the classical virtue of academic freedom. Features that relate to the virtue of *academic freedom* in the narrative include a humble, long-term commitment to solving questions arising from one's own curiosity and a striving for independent control of and maintaining enough space for one's work. *Autonomy*, on the other hand, is apparent in the narrative, as an ambitious and persistent search for one's "own thing", self and style of writing, as well as trying to renew one's daily routines and ways of coping.

The virtues of autonomy and freedom cannot, however, be separated from the communal nature of good work or the relationships of mutuality. Consequently, *partaking* takes shape through the relationships of mutuality and it holds a central position along with the virtues of autonomy and freedom. In our narrative, partaking connects with becoming equal and looking for common values, and also with becoming aware of the many interdependencies and shared fates within the disciplinary community. In the narrative a friend is not left behind, good moments are connected especially to appreciating others' work, to becoming equal, to empathy and to relationships of mutuality.

From this basis a general feature that characterizes good academic work would be the tension-laden trinity of these three virtues, that is, autonomy, partaking and freedom. Within this whole, individual elements of good work gain their meaning in relation to each other and the field of relations between these elements determines the whole. The third virtue or force that creates meaning for good work does not only connect the other two, but within good work all three elements appear together and function as essential determinants of good work (cf. Turunen 1987). Hence, good work lives within the dialogue of autonomy, partaking and freedom, and its essence is manifested as a whole, not as a collection of individual tasks, performances, special characteristics or dimensions (see also Kalleberg 2000).

With regard to sustaining hope it is important to realize that ideals attached to traditional individualistic heroes within the academy

are still important features of doing and experiencing good academic work. However, on their own they do not necessarily suffice to sustain hope within the diverse daily work in academia. Hope is born, nurtured and sustained between persons and through the relationships of mutuality with which it connects the members of a community to each other (Ludema et al. 1997).

The tension between hope and despair

Regarding hope, it is essential to understand that despair may also be extremely real. Stories about hope and stories about despair tell about each other, and they are always told side by side and in turn. Also, our narrative can be read as an account of good academic work *within the tension between hope and despair*. Good work is then based particularly on the conflicting hopes and fears regarding academics' future, where the 'best possible' and the 'worst possible' determine each other.

The best and the worst possible can naturally have many faces and here an interesting feature in our narrative is a kind of moderate modesty or caution. One of the academics' central hopes seems to be to be able to continue one's work in peace and to do it well and on a long-term basis. Through ambitious and persistence working, academics strive to develop their professional skills, to learn to write, to work together effectively and to obtain an equal position within their research community rather than for excellent performance, top quality results, or for a position in the academic elite. Honor and reputation do not seem to be the primary hopes that guide their work, even though academics hope that their texts will be found meaningful. Recognition is, however, expected for the determination and continuous striving for one's own "thing". Humility, modesty, justice, and equality stand out as central virtues in our narrative.

The apparent moderation of the academics' hopes may be explained

by the orientation and the instructions we presented to our research participants. We asked the academics within our community to write about "good events and experiences" and we did not guide them towards the best possible, peak experiences (cf. e.g. Cooperrider et al. 2000). Very few participants had any previous experiences of 'non-active role playing,' and thus no clear understanding of what we aimed at with this method or what kind of stories we actually searched for. Recognizing deep hopes of one's own is also a very personal matter, and reaching them is not always easy, even for oneself.

The apparent moderation may also be due to the fact that the academics' daily hopes are less eloquent than the rhetoric of science and higher education policy. The academics' hopes also tell a lot about the despair within daily academic work. When looking back on one's working history one can surely find good experiences, but when looking into the future the academics' hopes are haunted by worry, fear and anguish. Few academics have any idea of how long they may continue their work, and besides their own future they also worry about the future of their closest colleagues, as well as over the fate of their entire discipline. The ongoing curriculum reform and university governance are not only exhausting but also threatening – surviving these with only "minor damage" is considered a miracle. Some of the participants in our study had difficulties in finding even one good event or experience within their working situation. Some found it very far back in their working history and someone wrote explicitly that they could not cope for long in a constant force play anymore.

From this kind of tension between hope and despair the simple hope of being able to "do one's work well" cannot be regarded only as a moderate or cautious image of one's future. It should be a matter of course in any ambitious work, but in relation to today's despair in academic work it proves to be a hope that we find striking. The hope of being able to continue with one's work is courageous, even radical, considering that most academics worry constantly over the continuity of their

work. Instead of being able to concentrate on research, teaching and the autonomous development of their work on a long-term basis, academics are constantly required to obtain new merits and to increase the efficiency of all aspects of their work.

Meaningful work in absurd working conditions

Our narrative can also be interpreted as a hopeful striving for meaningful work in absurd working conditions. By absurd working conditions we refer to the growing worry over the shortage of meaningful working conditions that academics face, particularly in the disciplinary units of a present-day university. The anguish, insecurity and burnout of Tommi is not only a fear appearing in the nightmares of a fictive character in our narrative, but a real threat that may overtake any academic. Such distress is also widely confirmed in higher education research that reports many changes that are difficult to identify and manage, with outcomes that are difficult to predict or even foresee. One can be distressed when one does not know what to do, what would be right, how many things will prove unreachable, and what will eventually be the position of academics with fixed-term positions in the future university.

One can surely try to reject the feeling of absurdity by being indifferent, pessimistic or cynical towards the inevitable future. By minimizing or underrating one's hopes you can also protect yourself against unpleasant disappointments. Cynics are also fond of telling hopeful people how silly they are to hold on to their aspirations in the face of apparently overwhelming contrary evidence. What cynics fail to recognize is that out of such hopefulness something that is new and surprising may emerge. The value of hope is not dependent on its realizations, but it is in significant part an end in itself, allied to courage, persistence and imagination (Halpin 2003a, 5). Cynical pessimism is, however, not a formula for action, and in extreme forms it only paralyzes all inspiration.

Besides being pessimistic and cynical, the feeling of absurdity can be avoided by yielding to neo-liberal market economy thinking and by believing in the power of competition, efficiency, accountability, standardization, performativity, and individual assessment within higher education – and to hope that one's own strength will suffice. Or, one can always join the critique of absurd working conditions, which is an important part of social science research. A critical stance gives rise to questions such as *whose accounts*, *whose good reasons,* or *whose justice* determines academic work in the present-day university. Whose voices are ultimately heard when academic work and universities are being developed? And respectively, whose voices are suppressed or even neglected?

In this article, however, we did not want merely to reproduce the frequent criticism, according to which universities are being transformed towards market-oriented business organizations (see e.g. Nixon et al. 2001; Readings 1996; Ylijoki 2003). We do agree with this well justified criticism, but with respect to finding alternatives we find it troublesome. As such, a critical and problem-oriented approach mainly offers knowledge and sensitive vocabularies of lack, limitations and deficits. It maintains gloomy descriptions of daily academic misery instead of opening up inspiring and hopeful opportunities. From our perspective, it seems that the more you read about and explore the challenges and problems of present-day academia, the more captured by this stunning discourse you become (cf. Trowler 2001). At worst, it may limit our ability to see the meaning in our daily work and restrict our opportunities to act in favor of positive changes, which in turn only reinforces cynicism towards future work in universities. Following Lindqvist's (2004) metaphor, looking only for various coping or survival strategies feels just like remaining on the shore, feeling desperate.

Our way of facing the shortage of meaningful working conditions has been to take seriously both the academics' hopes and images of their future and their despair. By studying academic work from this

kind of perspective we try to complement the critical research on higher education change. From this perspective, we provide space for different meanings of hope and various dimensions of good work. Through hope we can also provide space for new opportunities and new kinds of future. From this perspective we understand hope as mental freedom that makes life meaningful and good work purposeful in the midst of conflicting traditions, ideals and changes. In the hope literature, hope is also perceived as a source of positive affect and well being, on which all feelings of joy, pride and elation are grounded. In our narrative on good academic work these feelings signify the joy of work, the joy that is connected with creative writing, the pride arising from one's own growing competence and the competence of others, that well up from "that liberating and kind laughter, which has been laughed in different tones – together and at oneself – and on many serious occasions, too."

Even if our research is focused on one university unit in Finland, we believe that it does not tell merely about the experiences, hopes and despair within this particular unit. Stories about the goals and ideals of managerialist, corporate universities are not only told in the texts of higher education researchers or in the rhetoric of science policy. They are also experienced and lived in daily academic work. On the other hand, daily academic work also includes stories that are seldom mentioned in development vocabularies aiming at efficiency, performance, and excellence in top-universities. Hence, the danger is that without an open and broad, moral discussion of the various meanings and purposes of good academic work, the future of higher education will shrink into stories from which the academics' own hopes, conceptions and experiences of good work are excluded. Providing space and giving voice to stories that stem from the heart of the university, we think, is crucial when the directions in which academic work and (Finnish) higher education should be developed are considered.

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