Is Resistance Really Futile?

A Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy Event

One Day Workshop, 10-5pm, Tuesday, 9th of March 2010
University of Leicester School of Management
301 Ken Edwards Building, University of Leicester

Description

How are we to understand resistance in these increasingly financialised times? What, if anything, does the resisting subject look like today? These are long posed questions, for sure – they are also questions which never go away. Within business and management studies, these questions seem to take on something of a special, if somewhat peculiar meaning. Is resistance to be located within revolutionary action alone? Or is it instead something which is always all around us? Is resistance inseparable from pathos? Or is there something about it which lends itself towards detached scrutiny? This workshop aims to analyse a variety of theories of resistance insofar as they have been used to make sense of the realities of the modern workplace. Presentations throughout the day will take a variety of conceptual and practical perspectives upon the question of resistance whilst the concluding roundtable will attempt to establish common strands of analysis.

Workshop Programme

10-10.45 Registration, Coffee and Welcome
10.45-12.15 Nikos Karfakis and George Kokkinidis – 
Re-thinking cynicism: Kynical parrhesia in contemporary workplaces

Ozan N. Alakavuklar
Is it possible to justify resistance?

Nceku Nyathi
Anticolonialism and organising for resistance and change

12:30-1.30 Lunch
1.30-3 Robert Cluley
On the Irresistibility of Resistance

Stevphen Shukaitis
Run This Town; or, Cultural Workers Throw Down Yr Tools, the Metropolis is on Strike

Martin Parker – Reflections and alternatives

3-3.30 Coffee
3.30-4.45 Roundtable Discussion – Moderator: Simon Lilley
4.45-5.00 Concluding Remarks & Farewell

Registration and Contact

Registration is free but places are severely limited. Please book early to avoid disappointment. For further information, please contact the workshop organisers, Ozan N. Alakavuklar ona3@le.ac.uk and Stephen Dunne sd142@le.ac.uk. We look forward to seeing you!
ABSTRACTS

Re-thinking cynicism: Kynical parrhesia in contemporary workplaces
Nikos Karfakis and George Kokkinidis, University of Leicester

This paper looks at the concept of cynicism as a form of employees’ resistance to managerial control. Some studies tend to view cynicism as a potentially conservative and self-defeating form of resistance that inherently thwarts the possibilities for open confrontation to power. We argue, however, that cynicism can also be viewed as a disruptive force, if we look at it in its original meaning. Drawing our inspiration from the works of the ‘late Foucault’ and Sloterdijk, we pay particular attention to the ethics of antiquity and more specifically to kynical parrhesia, with the aim to re-think cynicism and emphasize its potential applicability to our present organizational life.

Is it Possible to Justify Resistance?
Ozan N. Alakavuklar, University of Leicester

In organization and management textbooks resistance as a term can be seen in the “organizational change” chapters as a kind of obstacle in front of a change process mostly associated with a negative meaning. However, resistance in organizations is much more than such an understanding of pathological disorder that should be overcome. Various research traditions tried to understand the dynamics of resistance that is against the managerial control or organizational hegemony. Recognizing the importance of these traditions the question is based on how to justify resistance in organizations against the capitalistic way of organizing and managing? It is aimed to provide a ground for a fruitful discussion of politics, ethics and morality of resistance.

On The Irresistibility of Resistance
Robert J. Cluley, University of Leicester

Within Freudian psychoanalysis the term ‘resistance’ has a particular meaning. Resistance is an internal process that demonstrates both a desire to express something and a desire to suppress that expression. It is, in other words, a deeply ambivalent process. Identifying and unfolding the intricate relationships between these desires for expression and suppression, within psychoanalytic therapy, takes time and patience (and patients). But might this same framework for understanding the causes, frustrations and uses of resistance on a psychoanalytic level offer us a way to think through political resistance?
ABSTRACTS

Run This Town; or, Cultural Workers Throw Down Yr Tools the Metropolis is on Strike
Stevphen Shukaitis, University of Essex

Recent developments in autonomist thought have focused on the city as a site production and resistance, in particular as a locus of struggle precisely because of the becoming-productive of the city: from the social factory to the factory-city, the productive metropolis. To say that the metropolitan space has become productive, in the same way that it has been argued that all of life (social cooperation, communication, affects, creativity) has been made productive, leaves one with the question of how the metropolis has been made productive. What are the technologies of capture that render the metropolis productive? And how is it possible, by identifying the process of extracting value through such mechanisms, is it possible to find ways to contest these processes of value extraction and capitalist valorization?

With this in mind it is time to revisit arguments and conceptualization of the creative city and the creative class (as in the work of Richard Florida), and to view them from a class compositional framework. It is not then that they necessarily describe an empirical reality or condition, the existence of the creative city, but rather as a form of mythological social technology of governance: to bring it into being by declaring its existence. In other words, the question is not whether the creative class exists as such, but rather what effects are created through how it is described and called into being through forms of governance and social action based upon these claims. Planning and shaping the city based around a certain conceptualization of the creative potentiality of labor, or the potentiality of creativity put to work, is not an unprecedented or unique development, but rather is the latest example of capital’s attempt to continually valorize itself through recuperating the energies of organizing against it.

What we see is that capitalist production depends on the ability to produce a certain kind of glide, to circulate through networks of social cooperation and communication that are already in existence. The production of value then is not premised upon the activities of a bounded workplace (the labor of production within the factory to create commodities which then circulate), but rather precisely upon the labor of circulation within the rendered productive sociality of the metropolitan space. Through understanding the social technologies of rendering the city as a unified social fabric production it becomes possible to develop further strategies of refusal and resistance that finds avenues for creative sabotage and disruption all through out the city: a metropolitan strike.