

The Fold of Commitment

Rereading Douglas McGregor through Gilles Deleuze

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The fold of commitment – rereading Douglas McGregor through Gilles Deleuze

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Abstract

This paper serves two purposes. First, a rereading of Douglas McGregor's *An uneasy look at performance appraisal* serves to show how McGregor's conceptualization of commitment as a question of integrating personal goals with organizational purpose has helped shape founding the modern understanding of corporate community representation. Second, we suggest that French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concepts of fold, desire and interests can be useful in comprehending this modern form of corporate representation already present in McGregor's text.

Introduction

Since Tom Peters' and Robert H. Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* was published in 1982, an ever-growing number of books and articles have addressed how senior management, aided by human resource and communication departments, should strategically construe and represent the community of the corporation. In these books and articles it is argued that the community of the corporation draws together and organizes the multiple activities, processes and meanings of the corporation into a single representation (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985, p. 726). The corporation is represented as a collective 'we' of the organization (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) that characterizes a single business culture or a shared *esprit de corps* (Chiapello and Boltanski, 2005). In this sense the representation of organization has been defined in the following way:

Organization is defined as the degree to which a set of people share many beliefs, values, and assumptions that encourage them to make mutually-reinforcing interpretations of their own acts and the acts of others. (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 727)

The representation of organization can be found in the patterns emerging from the shared beliefs, values and assumptions that are conditioning the actions, prioritizations and behaviour of employees, managers, customers and stakeholders. The creation of this representation of organization is too important to be left alone; it needs to be engineered (Kunda, 1992). The mantra of contemporary companies seems to be that corporate products and production are more than meets the eye; they are inscribed in a symbolic meaning (Pfeffer, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

In this sense strategic visions and branding often have more than a material purpose, which employees can find a personal call and fulfilment in realising. This question of how employees can best achieve their personal goals and foster their personal development by directing their efforts towards the worldview of the organization was perhaps most succinctly expressed by Douglas McGregor (1906 - 1964), a founding father of contemporary management, when he wrote on the need ‘to encourage integration, to create a situation in which a subordinate can achieve his own goals best by directing his efforts toward the objectives of the enterprise’ (2006, p. 85). For McGregor employees can only be motivated by and committed to the company’s organizational goals if the organization provides the context, situation or condition for self-actualization in the process. For McGregor commitment is a question of integrating the overall goals of the corporation with the personal ambitions and goals of its employees. The success of such integration will unleash incredible amounts of what McGregor (2000, p. 6) called ‘creative human energy’.

In this article we will offer a rereading of McGregor’s understanding of commitment and creative human energy by drawing on the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s distinction between desire and interests, on the one hand, and his conception of a fold between an individual and her environment on the other. From such a Deleuzian perspective we can understand employees’ representation of the corporation through the desire and interests that drive and constitute individuals. While interests can be either collective goals or individual aspirations, desire is in Deleuzian terms what moves, breaks down and reconstitutes such personal and collective interests (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984). Through this conceptual distinction between desire and interests we will suggest a reading of McGregor that understands the representation of the corporation as a matter of socially informed desires that constantly form and reform the individual and the organizational interests or representations to which the corporation aspires. We will furthermore deploy the Deleuzian concept of the fold in order to show how these interests become actualized through the socially informed desires of individuals. To illustrate this new understanding, we will primarily rely on McGregor’s *An uneasy look at performance appraisal* (1957). In this reading we will argue that the integration of personal and organizational goals discussed at the performance appraisal interview should be understood as a dynamic process of ‘folding’ desire and interests.

The article follows this structure: first, we introduce McGregor’s concept of commitment and how it relates to the contemporary idea of employees as carriers of organizational representations. Next, we introduce Deleuze’s concepts of desire, interests and the fold, and then apply these concepts to McGregor’s thoughts on performance appraisal. In the third section we make the claim that the integration of personal and organizational goals that McGregor talks about should be understood as a dynamic process that not only folds the individual together with the collective she works for but also tries to guide her socially informed desire towards a common interest shared by employees and the corporation alike.

McGregor on commitment

Although often presented as the latest trend in management, the ideas of alignment and purpose have deep roots in management theory. The ideas can be traced back to the 1950s and Peter Drucker’s idea of management by objectives and self-control (Drucker, 1999). Douglas McGregor picks up Drucker’s work and incorporates it into his well-known Theory Y (McGregor, 2006). McGregor writes, ‘Its [Theory Y] purpose is to encourage integration, to create a situation in which a subordinate can achieve his own goals best by directing his efforts toward the objectives of the enterprise’ (2006, p. 85). This perspective is based on the notion that a company’s performance improves if employees’ behaviour, aspirations and beliefs are integrated with the overall corporate goals. McGregor argues that this can, for example, be done via performance appraisal interviews or what Drucker has called management by objectives (1957). Indeed, as McGregor (2000, p. 6) writes, Theory Y ‘is a process primarily of creating opportunities, releasing potential, removing obstacles, encouraging growth, providing guidance. It is what Drucker has called “management by objectives” in contrast to “management by control”’ (1999). McGregor considered integrating employees’ personal goals and aspirations with the business goals of the corporation through such management by objectives to be Columbus’ egg, as according to him this integration made it possible to maximize the responsibility and freedom of the individuals and the profits of the organization at the same time (McGregor, 2006). As McGregor (2006, p. 6) put it:

Many managers would agree that the effectiveness of their organizations would be at least doubled if they could discover how to tap the unrealized potential present in their human resources.

McGregor's assumption is to a large degree alive and kicking and a fundamental part of many contemporary managerial practices and forms of control such as performance management, balanced scorecard, performance appraisal, empowerment, self-leadership and participatory management (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000).

One of the important insights gained by Douglas McGregor is his notion of 'creative human energy' (McGregor, 2000, p. 6) locked inside the body and mind of the employee. Unlike Frederick W. Taylor (1914; 1919), for example, he does not view employees as workers that have to be motivated by economic ends and confined within restricted and coded spheres of responsibility to become productive. For McGregor (see, e.g., 2006, pp. 43-57), extrinsic rewards and threats cannot build a lasting and high level of commitment. The whole mechanical idea of the employee as a body set in motion by the application of an external force like a reward or punishment cannot fully express the reality of human nature. The idea not only confuses compliance with commitment but also engenders resentment through this confusion (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000, p. 92). Repercussions and behaviour modifications inhibit commitment whether produced through the direct punishment of an employee or the dangling of a desired object in front of her. Rather, commitment should be produced strictly indirectly, for then the reward is no longer something outside the activity, but the activity itself (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000).

McGregor's work was spurred by the fact that people are monitored and confined to specific positions of responsibility in their daily work, while in their spare time they commit themselves to a range of tasks (e.g., working for political organizations and unions, hobbies) with no particular motivation other than a desire to break from their current situation, to bring something new into the world or to become someone else (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000). It was this untapped energy that interested McGregor. As he put it, 'We are becoming quite certain that, under proper conditions, unimagined resources of creative human energy could become available within the organizational setting' (McGregor, 2000, p. 6).

McGregor concludes that this creative human energy is untapped because there is no room within the organization for personal expressions, goals and aspirations. Given the right conditions in the workplace, so the saying went, employees will actualize the immense source of creative human energy that transverses them with the same level of innovation and intensity as can be seen outside the workplace (McGregor, 2006).

This, however, demands that social regulation of the institution of work undergoes a complete renewal. As McGregor says, 'The real task of management is to create conditions that result in genuine collaboration throughout the organization. To create such conditions is to create a way of life' (McGregor cited in Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000, p. 140). In this way, McGregor would like work to become a way of life, not a restriction of life. This principle is also implicit in McGregor's statement that 'the essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own effort toward organizational objectives' (McGregor, 1957, p. 15). The primary aim of management is to align individual and collective interests through, for instance, a dynamic form of performance management that McGregor introduced in his 1957 Harvard Business Review piece *An uneasy look at performance appraisal*. In this article McGregor did not advocate an approach where managers alone held the position of 'playing God' (1957, p. 133). Instead, he suggested that employees should establish personal short-term goals, and that they should first analyse their own performance before being subjected to managers' appraisal. Furthermore, these appraisals should focus on future development not past performance (McGregor, 1957, p. 137) and on employees' strengths not weaknesses. These earlier thoughts by McGregor suggested the now accepted credo that management should encourage employees to develop their potential in the organizational settings.

In the following we will suggest that it can be fruitful to reinterpret McGregor's thoughts through the Deleuzian terms of folds, desire and interest. We will argue that McGregor's assumption about aligning personal and organizational goals can be viewed as a matter of igniting and channelling the human creative energy of which McGregor spoke. We will suggest that tapping into this energy process can be understood as what Deleuze in his collaboration with Félix Guattari called the flow and regulation of desire (1984). Understood as desire, 'creative human energy' should be considered as what moves, animates and breaks down what they would call the interests of individuals and groups. There is more. We will also argue that in McGregor such a regulation operates by installing what Deleuze and Guattari call certain interests that can align personal and organizational goals. It is these notions of desire and interests to which we now turn.

Deleuze on desire and interests

Gilles Deleuze has been widely discussed in relation to organization studies (see, e.g., Chia, 1995; Chia, 1999; Bougen and Young, 2000; Kristensen et al., 2014; Lilley, 2009; Linstead, 2002; Linstead & Thanem, 2007; Lohmann, & Steyart, 2006; Nayak, 2008; Styhre, 2002; Sørensen, 2005; Spoelstra, 2007; Thanem, 2004; Weiskopf & Loacker, 2006), but seldom in relation to the debate on the integration of individual and organizational goals (Kristensen, 2010; Pedersen, 2008; Pedersen, 2011). Nonetheless, Deleuze has some interesting assertions about how such goals and ambitions can be understood. The distinction Deleuze and Guattari draw between desire and interests is particularly important in this context as it allows us to understand a double logic in the very idea of integrating goals between the individual and the organization through commitment. In fact, we propose that McGregor's thoughts on performance appraisal as an integration of goals through employee commitment can be understood as a complex mixture between desire as a kind of creative human energy that fuels such goals and the very idea of commitment to organizational goals as a social interest set in place to channel this desire. Before we get so far, however, we must first understand how to grasp the concepts of desire and interests ontologically and analytically.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari (1984, p. 343) state that it is important on an ontological level to distinguish between the interests of individuals and groups and the investments of desire in the social world that constitute these individuals and groups. For Deleuze and Guattari interests refer not only to the material and economic aspects of an individual's or group's welfare. As Deleuzian commentator Daniel W. Smith (2012) argues, interest for Deleuze and Guattari also refers to the aspirations an individual or group can pursue in a more or less reflected and rational way. For instance, Smith states,

Someone may have an interest, say, in becoming an academic, so he or she applies to the university, takes courses, writes a thesis, attends conferences, goes on the job market in hopes of securing a job, finding an academic position. (2012, p. 186)

What characterizes interest, then, is its association with social aims (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 346). Accordingly, the interest of the individual is intertwined with an object or goal of a social nature. This, Deleuze and Guattari argue, means that if we are to understand why we bind ourselves to particular social interests (e.g., becoming an academic), we should understand how these interests are formed through investment of desire in the social (Smith, 2012). As they write, 'interest always comes after [desire]' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 346). Nothing ever begins or ends with the interests of an individual. For instance, if someone is capable of pursuing an interest in becoming an academic 'in a concerted and rational manner' (Smith, 2012, p. 186), it is because her desire is 'invested in the social formation that makes that interest possible' (Smith, 2012, p. 186). Thus, as Smith argues, it is first and foremost the individual's desire that becomes invested in the social in 'such a manner that your desire is positively invested in the system that allows you to have this particular interest' (Smith, 2012, p. 186). In fact, as Smith goes on to explain, for Deleuze and Guattari desire is not only what drives and produces the interests or ends we aspire to; it also produces us as individuals capable of having interests. But what, then, is desire?

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari make an important conceptual revision of what we understand as desire. According to them, desire is not something defined by a lack – for example, our desire for a piece of cake because we are hungry and lack sugar. Desire is rather something creative in so far as it connects objects, dreams, ideas, technology and so on. Desire is productive in such an understanding because it produces forms of existence – ways of being a human. Thus, as Deleuzian scholar Eugene Holland suggests, a way to understand the notion of desire as productive is 'in the same sense that lawyers "produce" evidence in a court of law: they cannot "wish" it into existence; they don't make it up, but they do make it count as real' (Holland, 1999, p. 23). Desire produces its own objects by construing certain patterns of flows that are made to count as real, remarkable and important in the entire surrounding of which they are part.

However, this does not mean that the positivity of desire or 'desiring-production' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 29) should be understood as a kind of primordial, cosmic energy that comes to be repressed by the rigid stings of the social. Desire is never something natural or spontaneous but is always assembled in the social setting in which it invests itself (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984). In fact, the social provides desire with direction and the means to arrive at these ends. As a result, the social world is always intermingled with desire to such a degree that the desires we consider 'most individual about ourselves' (Smith, 2012, p. 183) – our drives and impulses, even the unconscious desire and fantasies deep in our psyche – are already 'part of the social' (Smith, 2012, p. 183). Desire is always ordered and organized around certain interests, even if desire is in the midst of breaking these interests down by connecting them to something new. If we apply

these insights to our reading of McGregor, this means that his notion of a creative energy that has to be unlocked can be understood as desire. If so, however, this energy is not a primordial force or a unique personality trait but something that is always formed and channelled through a series of social interests – for instance, in becoming an academic.

Analytically, then, this distinction between desire and interests is appealing because it allows us to understand a phenomenon such as employee commitment or integration between an individual and an organization without ontologically presuming the existence of an individual. As Deleuze and Guattari make clear, nothing ever ends or begins in an individual. Even something as personal as an individual's desire and interests should be understood on a social level. Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of how we pay attention to 'the way a bureaucrat fondles his records' (1994, p. 293). When he fondles his records, a desire is shaping our mental and social world by introducing breaks and captures in the flow of things, words, people or papers, thus creating a pattern and circulation in these flows. For instance, the bureaucrat's papers emerge as the medium through which interests must be expressed in a bureaucracy – we must have it in writing to make it count. For its part, this implies that desire itself is something produced. If desire must always construe a social and mental pattern to prolong itself, it can therefore also only exist as part of a social and mental pattern. This adds another level of complexity to the conception of desire and interests. As explained, desire is what makes interest and individuals emerge. The desire to fondle papers is what makes the bureaucrat and his interests as part of a bureaucracy emerge in so far as this recurring desire to fondle gives constancy to these interests.

However, desire is also itself a product of its investment in the social. Desire has no existence outside of its investment in social institutions. There is no pure form or natural drive tied to the desire to fondle, for instance. The desire to fondle paper is always constructed and gains a pattern in the social world, for instance, in a bureaucracy. However, although the distinction between desire and interests allows us to understand the integration of employee goals with organizational goals, it still leaves us with the question of how desire and interests come to form a particular individual's hopes and aspirations. This is where the notion Deleuze calls 'the fold' comes into play.

Folds as production of individual subjectivity

In his reading of Leibniz (1993) and Foucault (2006) Deleuze turns to the concept of the fold to explain how individual subjectivity is produced. In terms of desire and interests the concept of the fold can be understood on both an ontological and an analytical level.

Ontologically, the fold can be read as a critique of the account of subjectivity as interiority presumed to be different from the exteriority of the social. Departing from this account, the concept of the fold suggests that such interiority is nothing more than a fold of the social. How does this relate to the idea of desire and interests? According to Deleuze, when desire is invested in the social, a folding occurs that makes an individual emerge with the particular interests of the employees. Again ontologically this folding is not a principle of confinement or control, but a principle of creating a kind of space wherein flows of desire can be expressed and actualized as individual and collective interests. As already stated, there is no form of desire that is not expressed in either individual or collective interests. Desire is always directly invested in a social setting of possible interests that shape the basic characteristic of desire. Without a social form such as an institution, a language or a piece of art, desire would disappear as soon as it emerged. As such, desire is productive since it breathes life into any social form of organization. However, at the same time this desire is never our own individual desire but formed and produced by the social arrangements of institutions, signs, bodies, thought of which we are part. Any form of social regulation of desire, then, functions by creating recurring conditions under which an individual such as an employee can express her aspirations and goals.

On an analytical level the concept of the fold as a production of subjectivity is a useful resource for understanding how identity regulation works in many knowledge companies today. For instance, Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato's ground-breaking analyses of subjectivity formation in contemporary work (2004) has shown that branding campaigns and strategic visions work by establishing what he in keeping with Deleuze (1993) calls 'a world' that does not exist, as such, but that comes into being when employees give expression to this world (Lazzarato, 2004). As Lazzarato puts it, 'the enterprise does not create its subject (workers and consumers) but the world within which the subject exists' (2004, p. 188). According to Lazzarato, such a folding entails a 'double-edged sword' (Lazzarato, 2004, p. 194). On the one hand, for employees to carry out work successfully, let desire flow and creative energy burst forth in their daily work tasks, their autonomy and individual substance must be affirmed, while, on the other hand, employees are required to belong to the organizational world – they have to desire the interests of the organization, so to speak. This means that the organization might project interests such as being innovative, increasing productivity or reducing costs, but these interests are not

mediated through clear-cut hierarchies and protocols, or even a strong corporate culture. Rather, they are reabsorbed, reformed and restated by each employee in her daily work and in her own unique manner (Lazzarato, 2004), on each occasion potentially creating a burst of desire that animates the organizational interests. In fact, it is only through this singular expression that these social interests have an impact and a meaning. Consequently, if the organization depends on the subjectivity of the employee as its vessel, then employees must internalize the organizational interests within them. However, the success of this internalization demands that employees externalize or express these interests in their daily work. They must desire, display and express their commitment to the organizational interests but do so by way of self-activating and managing the specific texture of human qualities that constitute them as subjects. The employee envelops and develops the organizational world or series of interests.

Performance appraisal as folding of desire and interests

In the following we suggest that the assumption of such a folding and unfolding of the organization's world in the subjectivity of employees' expressions is present in Douglas McGregor's writing on techniques of individual development in *An uneasy look at performance appraisal*. In referring to this process, McGregor sometimes takes recourse to the concept of 'performance appraisal techniques' (1957). These techniques include open communication interviews, information sharing, contracts, documents on future actions and trust-building techniques based on the factual data wherever possible. These techniques can be said to segment the goals of the individual and her organization. This segmentation is not rigid, but smooth and continuous. The task is not to establish standards and moulds for reviewing employee performance, but to assess the potential development of the employee and organization. As McGregor explains:

The superior's role is to help the man relate his self-appraisal, his "targets", and his plan for the ensuing period to the realities of the organization [later called coaching by McGregor]. The first step in this process is to arrive at a clear statement of the major features of the job. Rather than a formal job description, this is a document drawn up by the subordinate after studying the company-approved statement. It defines the broad areas of his responsibility as they actually work out in practice. The boss and the employee discuss the draft jointly and modify it as may be necessary. Working from this statement of responsibilities, the subordinate then establishes his goals or "targets" [...] they are explicitly stated and accompanied by a detailed account of the actions he proposes to take to reach them. This document is, in turn, discussed with the superior and modified until both are satisfied with it. (McGregor, 1957, p. 185)

This personal and organizational development through performance appraisal techniques can be said to work as a folding together of the individual and her organization that integrates 'personal goals or statements by the employee' and 'organizational goals or the company-approved statements'. Key for such a folding is what McGregor terms self-appraisal. Self-appraisal serves to make the employee assess her competencies and the need for new competencies as 'the individual knows – or can learn – more than anyone else about his capabilities, needs, strengths and weakness, and goals. In the end, only he can determine what is best for his development' (McGregor, 1957, p. 186). The self-appraisal – or folding, if you will – produces a number of personal goals manifested in a 'statement of responsibilities' (McGregor, 1957, p. 185) to which the manager provides feedback and adjustment through coaching in order to help the employee reach the stated goals.

Employees' personal goals are 'specific actions which the man proposes to take, i.e., setting up regular staff meetings to improve communication, reorganization of the office, completing or undertaking a certain study' (McGregor, 1957, p. 185). As such, 'personal goals' are always expected to be articulated in relation to the interests of the organization. McGregor's notion of 'organizational goals' singles out the relevance of the future task of enfolding these interests. The purpose of this is to modify these tasks so that the employee's personal expression of the organization – as Lazzarato says – does not diverge too greatly from the interests of the corporation (2004). The key here is that such modification seemingly always happens through employees' self-appraisal of their personal goals. According to McGregor, if employees are to commit to doing work tasks, they cannot be ordered to do so, but must come to desire doing them. As McGregor states, both the employee and organization should be satisfied with the adjustment (1957, p. 185). In this way, 'the organizational goals' can be read as what Lazzarato called the world, that is the series of interests that employees must enfold to perform – for instance, embracing organizational values, cutting costs or finding new streams of profit.

One way to put this is to say that the organization must first and foremost create a sense of belonging or commitment, as McGregor (1957; 2000) calls it. The organization must commit itself to producing a series of interests in which

employees' subjective expressions and the bursts of desire they create can be actualized. On the other hand, through the appraisal interview employees' 'personal goals' can help constitute the future 'organizational goals', thereby creating a burst of desire and thus the possibility of a series of new interests, new possible worlds into which the organization and employee can venture, for instance, new markets, more sustainable practices and so on. In short, the development of employees' personal expressions and the interests of the organization are always articulated through the abstract and continuous folding of desire and interests through a notion of commitment.

Regulating commitment

Of particular interest in McGregor's notion of commitment and performance appraisal is that the folding described above seems to take place through the call for employee and organizational commitment. Notably, commitment in this case cannot be regulated according to a stable interest through which employees should desire and appraise themselves. Instead, the very world of the organization or series of interests seems to have a more undetermined and abstract character. Indeed, the interests only seem to find concrete expression, meaning and impact through the daily actions and thoughts of the employee. Thus, the world the organization creates might be a series of interests employees are expected to desire, but these interests have an open-ended nature that becomes evident in the appraisal interview, or – put otherwise – when asked to self-appraise, employees look to the future as well as the past. Through the appraisal interview McGregor seems to suggest that manager and employee should always endeavour to expand and transgress the current way that personal and organizational goals are understood, thus making room for possible new connections of commitment between the organization and the employee. However, this does not mean that anything goes. There are also certain limits to the kinds of desire accommodated. For instance, the appraisal applied in the performance interview McGregor (1957) describes is used to rate the performance of an employee since the last meeting. In this appraisal, we often find that responsibility is divided and distributed. This is perhaps most apparent during the performance interview, whereby the employee was previously (at the last interview) tasked with contributing to a specific area of the organization's overall strategic goals, and it is now time to determine whether the employee has achieved the objective she was responsible for. This is done via not only rating-systems but also, as McGregor would have it, employees' self-analysis of both past and future performances. In this sense, the employee is burdened with her performances past and future. She is held responsible for her actions. More precisely, these acts of rating are regulatory and preventative because they work by channelling the desire that runs through employees in the act of self-appraisal. However, this form of regulation does not operate by making the employee conform to a predefined standard, as such. Rather, it operates by installing a set of interests to which the employee's possible new personal goals must relate. In this light as such, evaluations of past performances are not seen solely as having to be determined in relation to other performances, rated in a system and monitored in predetermined goals, but also as pointing towards the future. By this logic past performance is not a valid indicator of future performance, as the individual employee's job situation or the organization's overall situation can change at any time (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000, p. 54). Therefore, an employee's everyday performance should also be regarded as a kind of unexpected event in the appraisal situation, a burst of creative desire that cannot be reduced to a standard either. Viewed as an event, the past and future performances of an employee emerge as a certain undetermined element between the employee and the manager – something undecided that is potentially productive or destructive and must be 'discussed', as McGregor (1957, p. 185) suggests, in an effort to find the potential for further developing this burst of desire within the organizational world. In this way, the regulation and judgement of commitment always operates on elements and relations whose nature need not be specified or determined, but that must always be channelled through a discussion between the 'boss and the employee' (1957, p. 157).

The subjectivity produced in this social regulation is not a normalization, as such, there being no ideal standard for a good future performance but rather an originalization. The employee has to be original in the sense of being oneself as different from everyone else. However, this originality must be neither simple nor too complex. It should be unique in the sense that the employee has to convince managers that she desires the goals discussed, i.e., that these new goals will make her capable of becoming something else, thus bursting open the creative human energy that the organization wants to tap into. However, this also implies that the notion of being 'different from everyone else is what unlocks my potential' must still be part of a 'we' called the organization. Not an already actualized 'we', but an undetermined virtual 'we', or a 'we' always yet to come. Within the performance appraisal interview the employee is considered committed if she is both normalized and originalized. Understood through Deleuze, McGregor offers an ideal of the committed employee as one who is able to unfold the interests of an organization in the daily burst of desire the workday affords, while also anticipating and enfolding the future interests of the organization.

Concluding remarks

A stronger focus on aligning employees' beliefs, ideas, thoughts and desires with the company's overall business mission has followed the trend of creating a strong identity, purpose and culture (see, e.g., Boswell et al, 2006; Olins, 1989; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Employees should now identify themselves with the representation of the community of the corporation. In this article we have shown how McGregor's idea of commitment and performance appraisal contributes to the foundation of corporate community representation. Hence, McGregor's work on commitment and performance appraisal is relevant in relation not only to motivation theory but also to an understanding of how employees represent the corporation in the ways they live and behave.

We suggest that reading McGregor from a Deleuzian perspective could contribute an understanding of corporate community representation through employee behaviour that does not primarily concern the actual representation of corporate ideas and norms in the individual's will, interest, or conscious decision-making power. Rather, Deleuze provided us with a vocabulary of desire, interests and folds that lets us understand the integration of organizational and employee goals as a dynamic process taking place in an effort to channel what McGregor (2000, p. 6) called 'creative human energy' – an energy or desire that, as we termed it, flows between individuals before they are constituted as employees with certain personal interests. In short, we can learn from Deleuze's understanding to become aware of what is going on before the interests of the employees and organization are formed. Inspired by Maurizio Lazzarato's work adaptation of Deleuze's notion of the fold, we also argue that the community of the corporation is represented as a world or series of interests to the employees, but this corporate world does not have an existence outside the burst of desire or creative human energy unfolded when employees endeavour to express the interests of the organization in their daily work tasks. With this article we hope that the understanding of community representation from a Deleuzian perspective as a question of desire, interests and folds can inspire other people's work on corporate culture, commitment and performance appraisal.

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