

Humanistic Management Performativity 'in the Wild':

The Role of Performative Bundles of Practices

Oliver Laasch,

Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Claus Dierksmeier,

Global Ethic Institute, University of Tübingen, Germany

Reut Livne-Tarandach,

Lundquist College of Business, University of Oregon, USA

Michael Pirson,

Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University, New York City, USA

Pingping Fu,

Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Qing Qu

School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

Abstract: *Humanistic management practices are often perceived as 'unrealistic', as they stand in steep contrast to 'normal' business reality shaped by the commercial logic of neoclassic economics. The conceptual lens of performative practices focuses on how practices that appear to be unrealistic can be 'made real' through their enactment. This paper studies such performative humanistic practices of the three companies Greyston (USA), Good-Ark (China), and Allsafe (Germany). Through a thematic template analysis, we identify two distinct types of accompanying practices that enable the performativity of the core humanistic management practices studied. Enabling practices favored the initial performativity the humanistic practices by providing a local 'proof of concept'. Disseminating practices aided performativity by spreading humanistic practices and therefore increasing practices' global verisimilitude.*

Keywords: Values and management futures; managing for the common good; social innovation; job and work design, post bureaucratic organisations, corporate social responsibility

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“From my background, typical business... it intrigued me to see how this model could work”

(Roger, Greyston Bakery)

The commercial bakery Greyston practices open hiring, a human resources management practice invented by its CEO. The practice consists of hiring anyone who walks through the company’s door, no questions asked. Greyston does so out of a humanistic motivation to give people commonly considered ‘unemployable’ a chance. As Roger, an experienced executive, since recently working in Greyston, remarks, “this model” of open hiring was intriguing, as it appeared unlikely to “work”. He further roots this statement in the dominant neoclassic paradigm as it materializes in the tenets of strategic human resources management. Companies are understood to have to extensively evaluate new employees in order to hire the most valuable human resource for a company’s profitability, “to go through all the rigors of checking people's background and qualifications and interviewing” (Roger, Greyston). This implies that practices like open hiring based on a humanistic logic, are likely to contradict the neoclassic commercial logic of business. Therefore, they are believed to cannot exist, be ‘true’ or ‘possible’. Yet, Greyston has profitably been practicing open hiring for decades. How is this possible?

We will shed light on this intriguing phenomenon through the lens of performative practices. Greyston’s open hiring is an example of such a practice, which starts out as apparently unrealistic, but becomes real as it reshapes social reality over time (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Turnhout, Van Bommel, & Aarts, 2010). Performative practices resemble a self-fulfilling prophecy (Austin, 1962; Callon, 2007; Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016; Merton, 1948). Apart from some very recent examples (Garud & Gehman, 2016; Garud, Gehman, & Tharchen, 2017; Ligonie, 2017; Vásquez, Bencherki, Cooren, & Sergi, 2017), we know little about how organizing for performativity might take place (Gond et al., 2016) and of how it is driven by “theoreticians in the wild” (Callon, 2007: 41).

We conduct a comparative case study of the companies Greyston, Good-Ark, and Allsafe. Greyston consists of a commercial Bakery and a foundation in Yonkers, USA. Good-Ark, a Chinese semi-

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conductor manufacturer is known to divert attention from production, even in times of high demand, in order to support employees' spiritual development. Allsafe is a southern German car and aerospace industry supplier that has largely done away with control practices such as work schedules, budgets, hierarchies, and departments, as the company refuses to limit employees' freedom. We explore how such humanistic management practices can be performative, meaning to exist and grow, although they contradict contemporary management theory's tenets of what is and can be a business reality. Our initial research interest is to better understand such performative humanistic management practices.

We pursue a conceptual lead from the theories of practices discussion, which may explain the performativity of these practices. Performative practices have been conceptualized as individual or homogeneous practices (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Turnhout et al., 2010). However, the viability and therefore performativity of practices relies on the complex interrelatedness with other practices (Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2002). Greyston, for instance, claims "we are baking brownies to hire people". This implies the intimate entanglement and mutual dependence of both practices, the humanistic core practice of open hiring and the commercial practices related to bakery operations. This leads us to further scrutinize the interrelatedness of core humanistic practices like open hiring and other practices accompanying them, together forming an entangled bundle of practices: *How may the practices accompanying humanistic core practices help us to understand its performativity?*

PERFORMATIVE HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Theories of practices are focused on the construction of the social world that takes place through the collaborative enactment of practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2016; Schatzki, 2002) in entangled bundles of practices (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002; Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2002).

Innovation in Humanistic Management Practices

Humanistic management is centered on human concerns such as protecting human dignity (Davila-Gomez & Crowther, 2012; Pirson, Dierksmeier, & Goodpaster, 2014a), giving people freedom to act and develop

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(Dierksmeier, 2011), and in fostering a healthy community of persons in organizations (Melé, 2003). In humanistic management thinking, the quality with which human beings are treated in business can be arranged on a continuum of five levels (Melé, 2014): It ranges from the lowest level of maltreatment with blatant injustice, to indifference, justice, care, and on to the highest level of development, which is aimed at human flourishing.

Humanistic management may lead to unique practices of governing, managing, leading and organizing (Lawrence & Pirson, 2015; Pirson & Turnbull, 2016; Spitzeck, 2011), which contradict the taken-for-granted reality of an 'economistic logic' of management (Lawrence & Pirson, 2015; Melé, 2013; Pirson, Steinvorth, Largacha-Martinez, Dierksmeier, & Mulryne, 2014b; Pirson & Lawrence, 2010). This contradiction may make many humanistic management practices seem unrealistic or even impossible in a business reality dominated by the economistic logic. However, humanistic management practices have been found to be carried out (Von Kimakowitz, Pirson, Spitzeck, Dierksmeier, & Amann, 2011), and to even shape entire business models (Laasch, Dierksmeier, & Pirson, 2015; Randles & Laasch, 2016). The humanistic logic may provide practices with a new meaning that goes beyond or even against the commercial one (Laasch, 2018a; Laasch, 2018b), providing an alternative 'social rationality' (Ridley-Duff, 2008). While humanistic management praxis (Schatzki, 1996), the practicing or doing of humanistic management has been studied under the label of 'humanistic management in practice' (Von Kimakowitz et al., 2011), the specific practices of humanistic management remain largely unexplored.

In our empirical context performative practices take root in a 'management innovation' (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Hamel, 2006; Mol & Birkinshaw, 2009; Stata & Almond, 1989), breaking with justifying beliefs and leading to new innovative management practices. Such humanistic management innovation, is a type of social innovation (Kanter, 1998; Mulgan, 2006, 2012; Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007; Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008) of management practices by managers with a heightened sense of responsibility (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013; Laasch & Conaway, 2015, 2016). Such humanistic management innovation, justifies practices that break with the 'normal', taken-for-granted

'economistic' practices, for instance related to the shareholder imperative, profit maximization or the competition as dominant type of economic interaction (Lawrence & Pirson, 2015; Pirson et al., 2014b). It has been claimed that "reality proves possibility", that practicing humanistic management may help us to create "a more realistic theory" of management (Dierksmeier, 2011: 277; Laasch et al., 2015). In this paper we turn this argument around, to claim that a humanistic theory of management may create a more humanistic managerial reality through performative practices.

Performative Practices

The idea of performativity in business has been attributed to Merton (1948) who presented performative theory as "self-fulfilling prophecy [which] is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true." Austin (1962) provided a linguistic-psychological framing of 'doing things with words', creating new realities through communication. While there is a range of conceptions of performativity, we focus on the "bringing theory into being strand of performative research" (Gond et al., 2016: 447). We apply a sociological lens related to actor-network theory (Callon, 2007; Callon & Muniesa, 2005; MacKenzie, 2003). Here performativity is synonymous with 'ontological politics' (Law & Urry, 2004; Mol, 1999), social interventions of theorists engaging into social construction to make their theory of reality become an actual reality, to be(come) "true or at least enjoy a high degree of verisimilitude" (Callon, 2007: 346). The performativity discussion has been centered on the academic community of practice, but there also is an explicit appreciation of the performative agency of "theoreticians in the wild" (Callon, 2007: 41), particularly in the business context. An example is when a strategist theorizes models of reality, for instance, about customer needs, and engages in strategic marketing to make them come true (Vargha, 2017).

A salient role in the context of organizing performativity have performative practices whose enactment shapes new realities while making practices' underlying assumptions come true (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Turnhout et al., 2010). Performative practices studied are of communicative nature (Cooren, 2004; Gond et al., 2016); strategizing (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011);

decision making (Cabantous & Gond, 2011); and governing (Turnhout et al., 2010).¹ Practices may be at the heart of the process of constructing new realities, but they may also be an expression of the new reality constructed, an outcome (Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2015).

METHODS

This study began with a purposive case sampling (Coyne, 1997; Palys, 2008) aimed at finding companies considered profoundly humanistic. Using Laasch and colleagues' description (2015), Allsafe was approached in early 2017. It provided a first hint at humanistic performativity. Theoretical sampling (Coyne, 1997; Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007) was used to identify Good-Ark in late 2017 and Greyston early 2018, both exhibiting performative humanistic practices.

Data collection involved repeated visits and ethnographic immersions, in order to observe them first hand (Antonacopoulou, 2008; Manidis & Addo, 2017). Interviewees were chosen to provide an image of companies from a variety of perspectives including all types of positions in the business structure.

Insert Table 1 about here

Semi-structured interviews allowed to adjust questions to the variety of interviewees. Interviews covered three main themes (1) individuals' involvement in practice(s), (2) the humanistic meaning of practices, and (3) essential practices necessary for the humanistic core practices to work.

We applied a thematic template analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; King, 2004; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), coding interviewees' responses to identify repeating mentions of types of performative practices. This coding was centered on interview sections related to essential core practices. The outcomes are visualized in Table 2 and Figure 1.

¹ There is a strong implicit conceptual connection between the performative practices discussion and the discussion of performative aspects of routines (e.g. Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

FINDINGS

In all three cases we observed how business leaders hypothesized about how business reality (of their company and beyond) may function according to a humanistic logic. As visualized in Table 2, these hypotheses materialized as humanistic core practices. Greyston's founder Bernie Glassman hypothesized that people deemed unemployable according to the standard logic of human resources management could become productive members of an organizational community if given a chance. Good-Ark's hypothesis was that human beings' innate good could be brought out through spiritual education, for the benefit of both the human being and her surroundings including the company. In Allsafe, the hypothesis was that employees will assume responsibility for the company if they are given unusual freedom. This was a competing theory to the taken-for-granted business reality built around intensive control to make employees act in the best interest of a company.

Insert Table 2 about here

We will now address our research question about the performative role of bundles of practices that accompanied each of the humanistic core practices studied. We found two types of accompanying practices. Enabling practices were internally performative, fostering the humanistic core practice's legitimization and stabilization in its local context of origin, namely the three companies studied. Disseminating practices were directed towards an external context for transplanting, fertilizing, and nurturing the growth of a humanistic practice globally, outside the organization it had grown in.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Internal performativity through enabling practices

We identified four types of performativity-enabling practices: Practices enabled practical feasibility, ‘making it work’; economic feasibility, practices of reproducing economically; practices bolstering the new humanistic logic; and practices fostering the long-run continuity of enactment.

Practical feasibility in the case of Greyston, required practices of intensive cross-sector collaboration. One such collaborative practice was that Greyston hosted a case worker from the Westchester Jewish Community Services. The social worker supported employees in ‘private’ issues like childcare and applying for housing support, that otherwise would have kept them from coming to work. Similarly, Good-Ark’s practices such as enabling employees to more frequently see their family through additional vacation days, provided the necessary spaces employees needed to practice the Confucian values they had learnt. In Allsafe practical feasibility required the elimination of practices that stood in steep contrast to the egalitarian logic of eye-level management. This included the non-practicing of a variety of hierarchical practices, from vacation approval to budgetary spending.

In all companies we found evidence of practices for economic feasibility of the humanistic practices. The practice of open hiring was intimately entangled with commercial practices of running a bakery, providing jobs for which people could be hired and paid: “bake brownies to hire people.”² In Good-Ark, the heightened feeling of responsibility for the greater whole arising from an increasingly self-transcendent mindset of workers became a competence enabling new production practices, for instance related to eco-efficiency. These practices resulted in considerable operational improvements, which in turn meant that financial resources could be freed to pay employees during the time of their Confucian trainings. Allsafe, incentivized employees to enact their freedom responsibly to the gain for themselves and everybody else in the company by sophisticated practices of profit sharing. Consistent with Allsafe’s egalitarian humanistic culture, profit sharing included everybody, cleaning staff and managing director.

² <https://greyston.org/bakery/>

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Interviewees across companies were rather uncritical about the genuine humanistic motivation behind core humanistic practices. At first this appeared surprising as particularly the previously mentioned economic feasibility practices might have led to suspicions of instrumentality, of ‘they are only doing it for the money’. Our interviews hint at the role of rather peripheral humanistic practices without an explicit link to commercial gain, as bolstering trust into the humanistic core practices’ motivation. For instance, Greyston bakery was used to fund Greyston foundation, which in turn engaged in a variety of humanistic practices from human development through job skills training to running a community garden. Good-Ark extensively promoted volunteering in local communities and ran programs for children left behind with their grandparents as parents moved to the cities for work. Allsafe had a common practice to periodically increase the already above-average social and health benefits, often surprising employees.

Practices ensuring the long-term continuity of enactment can be exemplified through Greyston’s positive ‘outboarding’ practices. Employees who had successfully completed the open hiring program were typically encouraged to leave and were supported in their job search. This created space for a new hiree entering the practice and to give another person a chance. Good-Ark’s leadership took care to protect employees’ spiritual wellbeing from economic pressures. For instance, production was halted to address a perceived crisis in employees’ spiritual wellbeing, which had resulted in widespread gambling problems. Allsafe’s long-term feasibility practices can be summarized as practicing cautious growth. A shared perception among Allsafe’s employees was that too quick growth was threatening the company’s ability to practice eye-level-management and to give people freedom to act with responsibility. New employees were perceived to require considerable time to fully adjust to Allsafe’s unique style of work, or to decide they could not adjust and to leave voluntarily. Cautious growth practices took manifold form. Customers who did not harmoniously align with Allsafe’s values were rejected. eye-level practices were carefully cultivated in new employees to ensure they were also practiced in a new second facility close to Berlin.

External performativity through disseminating practices

We also found several themes of practices whose performative effect was to the outside of the companies that had given rise to them. Spreading new practices, once they have been stabilized in locally came with additional efforts and new challenges for realizing practices' wider performativity. The externally performative practices were aimed at helping the humanistic core practice to strike root in new companies and new commercial contexts or locations. In 2017/2018 both Greyston and Allsafe faced a challenge in the form of transferring their practices to the first newly opened branches. Allsafe opened the second production facility in Berlin and Greyston built a new bakery in the Netherlands. A second type of practice dissemination consisted of other organizations adopting the humanistic core practices in their own context, independently from Greyston, Good-Ark, and Allsafe.

A key accompanying practice was the provision of materials describing practices, such as Greyston Founder Bernie Glassman's "Instructions to the cook" (Glassman & Fields, 2010), Good-Ark's Confucian training materials, and Detlef Lohmann's management bestseller "... and by lunch time I go home" (Lohmann, 2014). A similar practice was the production of practice-describing videos and documentaries, such as Greyston's TED talks, Good-Ark's broadcasting channel, and Allsafe's documentary 'Augenhöhe'. Both accompanying practices made the humanistic core practices visible to a wider audience and sparked other organizations interest in adopting the humanistic practices themselves.

The performative practice above, attracted attention, which was then directed to two related practices. First, all three companies regularly hosted company and researcher visits, almost like a living museum for others to learn about their practices, and to possibly adjust and transplant the practices to other contexts and locations. This often led to collaboration with NGOs, such as Greyston's partnership with the Dutch Start Foundation adjusting open hiring to and promoting it in the Netherlands. Good-Ark collaborates with the Chung Hua Cultural Education Center in Malaysia to teach their practices. All three companies' intensive collaboration with researchers studying the humanistic practices are another salient example.

Secondly, all three companies also engaged in training the employees of other companies interested in adopting their respective humanistic practice. Greyston provided corporate trainings through the Center for Open Hiring. They also registered an open hiring trademark, to control the quality of open hiring practices elsewhere. Good-Ark is at the center of a network of Chinese, Singaporean, and Malaysian companies, together learning practices based on Confucian principles. Allsafe had been working with several multinational German companies interested in adopting Allsafe's eye-level management model.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to better understand the potentially performative role of practices that accompany humanistic core practices, together forming an intimately entangled performative bundle of practices. We found that the performativity of humanistic practices depended on such bundles. We identified two types of practices each fulfilling a distinct type of performative role. Enabling practices fostered initial performativity, a 'proof of concept'. Such practices fostered feasibility of the humanistic practices in the local context of the company which they emerged in. These practices showed that 'it can be done because it has been done' (Dierksmeier, 2011).

Disseminating practices instead contributed to the performativity of humanistic practices by enabling their transfer to new contexts. Disseminating practices increased the verisimilitude of the humanistic practice in the more general reality of a larger population of businesses. With every new organization adopting a humanistic practice, performativity increased as the degree of verisimilitude with which the practice's underlying assumptions were true in the business reality grew. We contribute to both, the emerging discussion of performative practices 'in the wild' of organizational realities, and to the discussion of the dissemination of humanistic practices aimed at the ultimate goal of creating a humanistic economy.

To the performative practices discussion we offer an additional grounding in the sociology of practice's rich conceptual world of bundles of heterogeneous practices (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002; Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2002). Different to the extant performative practices literature which is centered on individual

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performative practices of one type (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Turnhout et al., 2010), we pilot and suggest further research of the performative role of bundles of practices. Such research could, for instance, study the shared meanings, materials, and competences (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012) necessary for the enactment of such bundles of performative practices. This may include to study the ‘theorists in the wild’, all of whom were CEOs, including their motivations and values (e.g. Fu, Tsui, Liu, & Li, 2010; Waldman et al., 2006), but also by others enacting practices. Further research may also zoom into the bundles (Nicolini, 2009) to scrutinize the distinct performative implications of distinct patterns, or constellations of the practices in these bundles (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002).

Secondly, we contribute to the discussion of humanistic management. We create an alternative to humanistic management’s implicit assumption that academics come up with new theories of doing humanistic management, which then have to be transferred unilaterally into managerial practice(s) (e.g. Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001). Theories of humanistic management can well emerge in practice and be proved through practice; no academic intervention required. We also connect to the notion that humanistic management can be done because it has been done (Dierksmeier, 2011), but go beyond it by creating an appreciation of how to do it and make it real through performative practices. Resourcing theory’s concept of ampliative cycles in the prosocial behavior context (Feldman & Worline, 2011) may help us to better understand the sequencing and iterative nature of the process that increases the humanistic core practices verisimilitude, and that makes them ‘increasingly real’. By introducing the conceptual lens of performativity to the humanistic management discussion we envision to create a similarly rich discussion to the one of the performative project of critical management (Cabantous, Gond, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016; Leca, Gond, & Barin Cruz, 2014; Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009).

The idea of bundles of performative practices creating protected environments where practices can survive and thrive in spite of their contradictions with the accepted and taken-for-granted business reality closely resembles the idea of niches in the sustainability transitions discussion that are protected from the ‘regime’ (Geels, 2002; Geels, 2005; Voß, 2014). Further research might bring those two discussions

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together by studying how bundles of performative practices create niches protected from the regime of mainstream economic logic, according to which they cannot exist. It might study how humanistic practices ‘grow legs’ to spread further and to possibly even lead to transition processes in the larger economic system. Finally, all of these insights of the performativity of practices that contradict taken-for-granted assumptions about managerial reality may lead to further research in the variety of lenses that promote management at odds with the current reality. This includes, among others, sustainability management, responsible management, and a variety of other alternative management paradigms (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015; Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2014; Jay, 2013; Parker, 2002; Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015).

Third, our study also holds important implications for practitioners involved in creating and disseminating new practices, theorists in the wild, just like Bernie Glassman, Nianbo Wu, and Detlef Lohmann. Our findings suggest that the success of these performative endeavors depends on the successful construction of a performative bundle of accompanying practices. Enabling bundles of practices are like the nurturing soil of a tree sapling. Disseminating practices can be considered to produce the root ball that has to be transferred with a tree when it is to be moved to a new location. We provide insights for practitioners as to what types of accompanying practices they might want to construct to increase the performative potential of their humanistic core practices.

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Table 1: Comparative Cases' Baseline Information

	Greyston	Good-Ark	Allsafe
Industry/ products	Foods/ Brownies	Technology/ Semi-conductors	Automotive and aerospace/ load restraints and fixtures
Location	Yonkers, New York City USA	Suzhou, Zhejiang province China	Engen, southern Germany
Size (employees/ revenues in 2017)	148/ 19 million Euros	1282/ 247 million Euros	260/ 62 million Euros
Interviewees/ individual/ group interviews	11/11/2	26/30/4	72/72/4
Exemplary interviewees' positions in company	Trainee, bakery team supervisor, social case worker, key account manager Ben & Jerry's, director center for open hiring, managing director, chief executive officer	Factory worker, human resources manager, middle manager, frontline manager, vice president Happy Enterprise Promotion, vice president Operations, company chairman	Cleaning staff, temporary worker, assembly worker, team coach, human resources manager, head of production, director organizational development, owner, general manager

Table 2: Performative Humanistic Core Practices across Companies

	Greyston	Good-Ark	Allsafe
Commercial reality/ norm →humanistic deviation from norm	Employer identifying find 'most valuable' employees →Employee self-selection no questions asked	Instrumentalization of employees' as means ('human resources') →Employee wellbeing as end	Employees control for maximum performance →giving employees freedom will lead to responsibility
Core humanistic practices	<i>Open hiring:</i> Hiring anyone putting themselves on Greyston's list without any background checks: -Receiving prospective hires spontaneously -Only asking for hires work permission, nothing else	<i>Humanistic spiritual development:</i> Educating employees in the life lessons of Confucian philosophy: -Teaching and discussion of Confucian philosophy -Sharing a phrase of Confucian wisdom a day with a co-worker	<i>'Augenhöhe' (eye-level) organizing:</i> Promoting employees' freedom and responsibility to decide and act: -Employees' self- permission (to spend money, vacation time, etc.) -Self-directed work (working hours, joining teams/ projects)

Figure 1: Accompanying Performative Practices

