



‘Come on, get happy!’¹: Exploring absurdity and sites of alternate ordering in *Twin Peaks*

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abstract

This paper is interested in investigating the complex nexus of sites of organizing and absurdity emerging from the persistent undermining and intermingling of common orders, logics and conventions. In its analysis the paper refers to an example from popular culture – the detective series *Twin Peaks* – which presents a ‘city of absurdity’. The series is discussed utilizing Foucault’s (1986) concept of heterotopia which allows us to convey the ‘other side’ of ‘normal’ order and rational reason, immanent in sites of organizing. Fundamentally, the sites in *Twin Peaks* evoke an understanding of organization as a dynamic assemblage in which heterogeneous orders, conventions and practices interrelate and collide. Analysed through a ‘heterotopic lens’, *Twin Peaks* contributes to the exploration of absurdity as a form of humour, and more generally to a sensitive and vivid knowing and experiencing of organization, organizational ‘otherness’ and absurdity.

Introduction

I think humor is like electricity. You work with it but you don’t understand how it works. It’s an enigma. (Lynch in Murray, 1992/2009: 144)

Humour and comicality are integrative aspects of human behaviour, relations and experience, emerging and manifesting themselves in variegated forms,

1 In the second season of *Twin Peaks*, Leland Palmer, the father of murdered Laura, suddenly shows up with his hair all turned white. He starts singing ‘forget your troubles, come on get happy, waiting for the judgment day’, and drops down to the floor with a heart-attack.

functions and outcomes (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007: 12). Based on the assumption that in contemporary organizations ludicrous and obscure elements and practices are notably widespread (Collinson, 2002), the present paper shares a particular interest in exploring the complex interrelation between organizational sites and absurdity, which is an aspect of humour hardly explored within organization studies (OS). Absurdity essentially operates by consistently colliding and juxtaposing different social and discursive orders, norms and conventions (Dougherty, 1994). Through doing so, it highlights the 'disturbing' and unsettling facet accompanying comicality in organizational contexts, and beyond (Butler, 2015; Cooper and Pease, 2002).

The film director and artist David Lynch, amongst others, has drawn on the nexus between humour and the absurd. In one of his interviews, Lynch, often referred to as the 'master of the absurd, the surreal and grotesque' (Hewitt, 1986/2009: 29), argued that 'humor exists in the midst of serious things, or in the wrong place; it's the weirdest intersections in life' (Andrew, 1992/2009: 148). That which occupies 'the wrong place' and that which deviates from the 'regular picture' is then what Lynch conceives of as the absurd (Breskin, 1990/2009: 85). With that said, the absurd tends to emerge as what is without obvious, uniform meaning but erodes, undermines and counter-acts common, apparently rational logic(s) and order(s) (Palmer, 1987). As a result, the absurd seems to be concomitant with ambiguous, more or less productive effects for sites of organizing and the individuals operating within them (see also Kenny and Euchler, 2012).

Empirically, we explore absurdity as a form of humour and vivid aspect of organizational life with reference to an example from popular culture (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007) – the TV series *Twin Peaks* (TP), produced by David Lynch. We argue that TP illustrates a space or 'city of absurdity' *par excellence* (Blassmann, 1999). It is a genre-splicing work of film art, a parodic, 'convention-defying detective story' (Lavery, 1995: 16). More precisely, TP is an intense fantasy about high-school life in a small US town somewhere near Montana, in which events follow the murder of a young woman, who 'turns out not to be as pure as everyone thought' (Woodward, 1990/2009: 51). Central to the series is the exploration of the town's involvement in the girl's death. In combining a police investigation with a TV soap opera with strong surreal elements, the series prominently alters and undermines 'normal' orders, established boundaries and the 'grid' of common meaning – in television narratives, but also far beyond (Telotte, 1995: 165). Apart from the 'stark disturbances in the order of things' (*ibid.*: 162) that infuse TP's sites of organizing, there is, moreover, a very mysterious dimension to TP's 'multi-layered' characters involving an ominous sense that anything could befall them (Woodward, 1990/2009: 50). More often

than not their dialogues and interactions appear, like the general course of action, absurd and ludicrous. Essentially, TP seems to be a 'strange carnival' where various 'strange things are said' (Andrew, 1992/2009: 148), and where meanings are often nebulous and 'scattered'.

In our exploration of TP we will utilize Michel Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*. Heterotopias are 'other sites' or 'spaces of alternate ordering' that connect and juxtapose different orders, norms and practices in one site (Topinka, 2010). Foucault first introduced the concept in *The order of things* in 1966, followed by a lecture he gave for architects on the question of space the next year (Foucault, 1986). Heterotopias are, against the background of Foucault's later work (1984), often read as 'spaces of resistance' closely linked to power *and* freedom (Dumm, 2002). However, initially, Foucault (1970) mainly highlighted the ability of heterotopias to order and categorize – words, things, images and knowledge – in *other*, not taken for granted ways. For this reason heterotopias are commonly associated with an 'irritating' and 'disturbing nature' (*ibid.*: xvi). It is this condition of 'disturbing the order of things' (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007: 6) that inspired us to use the notion of heterotopia as an analytical lens in our study of TP as a 'city of absurdity'. This concept allows us to illustrate how TP's sites of (other) organizing function and operate. Namely, as spaces of subversion, recreation and potential de(con)struction of dominant social and organizational landmarks.

Within OS, however, the concept of heterotopia is still seldom noticed and explored. This is surprising as the notion of heterotopia paradigmatically illustrates Foucault's (1970) concern to challenge any seemingly given classification, 'grammar' or 'natural' order of things and words. In highlighting the varied, relational and contested character of processes of ordering (Johnson, 2006), the concept provides the field of OS with an alternate perspective on *organization* (Burrell, 1988). Heterotopias form a counter-construct and thus the opposite of a uniform and rational notion of organization, 'endued' with clear and stringent purposes and means (Kornberger and Clegg, 2003). They illustrate the relevance and power of multiplicity and 'otherness' for the emergence of organization and, in doing so, trigger ideas regarding modifying and potentially reversing established modes of knowing, seeing and speaking about organization (de Cock, 2000).

As an exemplary instance of a wide set or 'bundle' of heterotopias, the analysis of TP promises to be illuminating for our understanding of (other) organization and organizing. TP introduces us to a world of organizing in which order and disorder, realism and surrealism, and comic and darkness are linked and intermingled in complex and dynamic ways (Telotte, 1995: 160; see also Clegg, et

al., 2005). With its focus on the 'other', deviant and disruptive sides of organizing, TP, analyzed through a heterotopic lens, evokes both the constraints and absurdities concomitant with a static and representational understanding of organization (de Cock, 2000). With that said, our exploration of TP's 'city of absurdity' contributes to studies on organizational humour and, more specifically, absurdity as a form of humour (e.g. Cooper and Pease, 2002; Westwood and Rhodes, 2007). Moreover, our heterotopic analysis contributes to OS interested in the significance of otherness and absurdity for organization and sites of organizing (e.g. Hjorth, 2005; Kornberger and Clegg, 2003). It offers different opportunities to reflect upon the question of what 'ordering differently' implies for contemporary organization(s), work and life.

The paper is structured as follows: In section 2, we briefly introduce and discuss studies of humour in and of organization. In section 3 we outline, with reference to TP and the work of David Lynch, the possible contributions of film and TV to the analysis of organization and organizational phenomena. Section 4 introduces Foucault's concept of heterotopias as 'spaces of difference and other order/ing'. In section 5, we use this concept to explore the operating and working of TP as a 'city of absurdity'. In section 6, we discuss the organizational implications of our analysis, arguing that the study of TP's sites of other organizing prompts a vivid and critical perception of organization(s). Section 7 summarizes the central insights and contributions of the paper.

Humour and absurdity in/of organization

Research on humour and comicality in organizations and the workplace is an increasingly prevalent topic in OS (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007). The field can broadly be divided into two traditions, the functionalist and the critical tradition. Provided that humour is 'appropriately' managed and controlled, it is, in the former tradition, associated with beneficial managerial and organizational outcomes, for example, organizational commitment, creativity, diversity, collective learning and problem-solving (Cooper, 2005; see also Westwood, 2004). While there is, indeed, 'a danger of humour, as an enormously rich and complex facet of human behaviour, being appropriated by a managerialist discourse' (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007: 4), there is also the assumption that humour cannot be fully captured and instrumentalized by management (Collinson, 2002). In critical OS research it is claimed that humour also involves the *potential* to defamiliarize and question common sense and taken for granted order and practice. This defamiliarizing is based on the capacity of humour and the comic to say 'other things and truths' or to say things differently (Cooper and Pease, 2002). Humour can also be used as a 'tool against management'

(Critchley, 2007), and thus as a source of subversion of dominant orders, structures and relations of power. We position our study within the context of this critical tradition and argue, following Westwood and Rhodes (2007: 4), that it is suitable to account for 'the complexities and ambiguities of humour'. This implies that humour, its functioning and its effects are considered as neither simply managerialist nor purely resistive (Kenny and Euchler, 2012: 320). Humour can contribute to both the undermining of established social and organizational orders and distinctions, and to their reproduction and maintenance (Butler, 2015).

However, most studies of humour 'at work', be they part of the functionalist or critical tradition, study humour *in* organizations. While we consider work and the workplace interesting contexts for the study of humour, in the present paper we, in contrast, look at humour *of* organization (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007). This means that we examine how organization – and its humorous sides – are represented in popular culture. Assuming that such representations are not simply un- or surreal (*ibid.*), we analyze, as mentioned above, the TV series *Twin Peaks*, which is full of ludicrous and absurd aspects of organization. Under-explored in OS as a form of humour, absurdity notably reveals the ability of comicality to break up and intervene in prevalent orders and mundane meanings (Critchley, 2007: 24; Palmer, 1987). A more precise definition of absurdity makes this clear: the absurd is usually understood as a matter or phenomenon that a) contradicts or goes beyond *formal logic* and reason; b) is not in accordance and alignment with *common sense* and commonly held values and expectations; and c) is linked to *ridicule*, foolishness and laughter (Dougherty, 1994: 141). While it is, on that basis, commonly argued that absurdity's intermingling of different, seemingly unreasonable and contradictory orders and conventions provokes the perception of meaninglessness and nonsense (Cooper and Pease, 2002: 309), we claim that the absurd is not solely about lack of meaning and order, but about *other* orders and logics of ordering (see also de Cock, 2000). Evaluated as a threat to 'serious' order and rational reason that frequently, yet not necessarily, prompts laughter (Kavanagh and O'Sullivan, 2007: 244), absurdity is also often equated with unease (Westwood, 2004). To us though, absurdity is above all about the persistent reversion and questioning of conventional boundaries and distinctions that define what is 'real', 'normal' and logical, and what is 'unreal', 'abnormal' and illogical (Collinson, 2002: 270).

However, we acknowledge that the multiple 'other orders', meanings and realities that absurdity evokes and is based on surround it with ambiguity and a subversive potential, playing out in the context of organizations and beyond (Palmer, 1987). The example of *Twin Peaks*, which conveys various bizarre sites, characters and behavioural patterns, all dispensing and violating ordinary reason

and logic of order, will provide us with further insights into the complex 'nature' and operations of absurdity as a form of humour and element of organization/organizing more generally. First, we discuss, with reference to David Lynch, film and TV as a medium of organizational analysis.

Organizational analysis, film, TV and the world of David Lynch

In art media, such as literary fiction, photography or film, organization and work are often portrayed in a more complex and diverse manner than they are in conventional academic writing. Following scholars such as Warren (2008), Hancock (2005) and Weiskopf (2014), we argue that artistic-aesthetic engagements with questions of organization can contribute to a vivid perception of organizational life and phenomena. More specifically, the medium of film undermines abstract and generalizing representations of organizational practice and knowledge, and *illustrates* instead their particular, multifarious nature (Foreman and Thatchenkery, 1996: 49). Like other forms of social inquiry, film thereby *in-forms* and is informed by the (organizational) reality it delineates (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007; see also Cooper and Law, 1995). Further, we argue that film can, similar to TV series like *Twin Peaks*, trigger our imagination and provide us with the chance to both critically and creatively reflect upon established, often idealizing images of organization and organizing (Weiskopf, 2014).

With regard to David Lynch and his approach to film, we first note that, for the American artist, film provides the opportunity to 'make experiences', namely 'experiences that would be pretty dangerous or strange for us in real life' (Murray, 1992/2009: 136). Following Lynch, film is an art medium that subverts and plays with well-known boundaries, meanings – and with our senses. In 'film, things get heightened; you see things a little bit more and feel things a little bit more' (Breskin, 1999/2009: 80) and differently. This way, film can 'open a window' (Andrew, 1992/2009: 148). This also applies to TV, an art form that Lynch considers as notably interesting as it offers privacy and intimacy, next to openness and 'great narrative freedom' (Chion, 1995: 103). When watching TV, people are 'in their own homes and...well placed for entering into a dream' (Henry, 1999/2009: 103). They are well placed for entering another space and world.

In this respect the aesthetics of Lynch's film and TV art is widely acknowledged as unique within the American film industry (Breskin, 1990/2009). While the majority of this industry presents clear 'morality tales' for western society and organizations (Weiskopf, 2014), Lynch's work does not 'serve' or come up with

straightforward, easily accessible and uniform sets of moral codes and values. Rather, filmic art works such as TP show that Lynch persistently challenges, reverses and erodes prevalent – societal, work- and organization-related – values and orders (such as 'good' and 'evil', real and surreal, normal and deviant), and thereby commonly prompts mockery and the perception of absurdity (Lavery, 1995). Central to TP is, indeed, the pulling of 'events, images, and language out of their normal conduct' (Telotte, 1995: 172) – which often forces us to laugh and 'to see them anew' (*ibid.*).

With these contexts in mind we briefly turn to the series itself. After its release in spring 1990 TP was soon considered 'the most original and weirdest soap opera to grace the television screen' (Odell and LeBlanc, 2007: 47). A central reason for this evaluation resides in TP's systematic resistance to linear narrations and 'narrative closure' (Henry, 1999/2009), resulting in the emergence of various and steadily colliding narratives and plots. The 'otherness' and absurdity often ascribed to TP and its complex storyline(s) (Telotte, 1995) are further sustained by a very dense and detailed scripting of TP's subplots, 'making up' TP as a 'soap opera in extremis and in minutia' (Odell and LeBlanc, 2007: 72). Odell and Leblanc (2007) suggest that it is unlikely that any other series 'could get away with the multiple cliff-hanger conclusion' (*ibid.*) to TP's seasons one and two; yet, as TP reverses any conventional (TV) code and order(s), it seems, for instance, perfectly normal that its characters 'interrupt the action to enjoy the smell of good, fresh air, the aroma of a good cup of coffee or an apple pie, or even the heavenly pleasure of peeing in the woods' (Chion, 1995: 111). In conjunction with dancing dwarves, echoing owls and restless trees, TP displays emotions that are notably moving and, at times, hardly bearable and disturbing (Breskin, 1990/2009). More generally, the TV series creates an extraordinarily intense atmosphere and aesthetic aura that allows people to get immersed 'in the fullest possible way' (Lavery, 1995: 7; see also Hancock, 2005). In placing upfront the obscure, absurd and eccentric sides of social and organizational life, this piece of film art provides the epitome of a 'Lynchian experience'. Through doing so, it also offers us the opportunity to learn and practice 'other thinking' of organization, i.e. a thinking that subverts linear, homogeneous and reason-based logics, and instead promotes multiplicity, openness and difference in/of organization(s) (Clegg et al., 2005).

Only at very first sight does TP appear as an ordinary murder mystery, happening in a 'peaceful' American town. Together with Special Agent Dale Cooper, the series' main protagonist, we soon realize that the murdered homecoming queen, Laura Palmer, lived a precarious, multi-layered life. We then start to understand that TP is 'full of secrets', variegated orders, ambiguous

characters and ‘supernatural’ overtones (Hewitt, 1986/2009).² Before we analyze TP’s ‘city of absurdity’ in more detail, we discuss below the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia. It will serve as an analytical lens in our exploration of TP’s sites of (other) organizing.



Figure 1: Agent Cooper driving into Twin Peaks³

The concept of heterotopia

Following Foucault, heterotopias present ‘spaces of difference and otherness’. As such, they can be understood as spatial sites that ‘organize a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them’ (Hetherington, 1997: 41). Due to this quality of ‘other organizing’, they often interfere in and disturb established orders and modes of ordering (*ibid.*). By not being ‘in place’ or the ‘right’ place, heterotopias serve to remind us first and foremost of the contingency of social, cultural and discursive orders and classifications (de Cock, 2000). They intrude ‘an alternate reality on a dominant one’ (Westwood and Rhodes, 2007: 6) and, by this means, contribute to the emergence of ways of seeing, speaking and knowing ‘differently’.

² For a more detailed introduction to *Twin Peaks*’ storyline see, for instance, Blassmann (1999) or <http://www.notcoming.com/features/a-guide-to-twin-peaks/>.

³ Figures 1, 3 and 4 are screenshots taken by the authors.

When introducing the concept, Foucault (1986) focused on heterotopias as textual/discursive spaces and thus primarily explored the links between space and the order of (spoken, written or visual) texts. Characteristic of textual heterotopias is the undermining of language, common names and symbols and the tangling of syntax (Dumm, 2002: 35). They 'desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source' (Foucault, 1970: xvii), and through doing so 'dissolve our myths' as regards coherent and stable classification schemes that 'hold together' words and things (*ibid.*: xviii). However heterotopias do not only unsettle and shatter discursive orders – but also 'the order of things' (Dumm, 2002: 43). As Foucault's (1970: 6) later reflections on the concept show, heterotopias have a physical (i.e. social-material) condition too. Their basic characteristic though remains the same: as 'other spaces' heterotopias challenge and disrupt dominant patterns and modes of ordering knowledge and truth. Over the years, heterotopic notions that focus on the interrelation between space and culture have also gained in significance within OS, and more generally the social sciences. Contemporary studies of 'other spaces' are mainly inspired by the idea of 'thinking space socially' (e.g. Hjorth, 2005; Kornberger and Clegg, 2003; Topinka, 2010).

Following Foucault (1986), there are essentially six characteristics or principles that can be attributed to heterotopias as social sites. Firstly, 'spaces of other ordering' exist in every culture. They are 'designed into the very institution of society' (Hjorth, 2005: 393) and as such are *universal* (Topinka, 2010: 57). Secondly, heterotopias are dynamic spatial sites. Their *functions* and use can *change* over time (Dumm, 2002: 40). Thirdly, heterotopias are *multiple spaces* that juxtapose heterogeneous spaces and orders in one site (Foucault, 1986). Fourthly, heterotopias are connected with *time*. Time can be interrupted, compressed, accumulated, intensified or simply be fleeting in 'other spaces' (Davis, 2010: 670). Fifthly, heterotopias are *different* from all other sites that they might reflect or discuss. Yet they are not completely separate or disconnected from other social sites (Dumm, 2002: 40). Finally, this implies that heterotopias do not exist on their own; they are *relational* and thus have a function in relation to all 'the space that remains' (Foucault, 1986: 27). Given these premises or principles, heterotopias are not to be confused with 'utopias' or spaces of pure imagination. While they can hold close relations to imaginary-symbolic sites, heterotopias are 'real sites' that reflect upon the conditions of the present (Davis, 2010: 663). In Foucault's (1986: 24) words: heterotopias are places which exist as 'something like counter-sites in which...all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'.

In his few texts on other spaces, Foucault discussed various kinds of social heterotopias to illustrate their complex 'nature', functions and relations.

Amongst other places he refers to homes of the aged, psychiatric hospitals, cemeteries, brothels, theaters, museums, carnivals and ships as heterotopic sites (Foucault, 1986: 27). Considering this diversity, it seems self-evident that heterotopias both constitute and are accompanied by manifold effects. This aspect is worth foregrounding, especially as many Foucauldian scholars tend to interpret heterotopias in terms of ‘ideal’ spaces of resistance, subversion and transgression (Hjorth, 2005; Johnson, 2006). Whilst we acknowledge the ability of heterotopias to suspend established orders, we do not consider them only as sites from where resistance and critique emerge (Dumm, 2002: 38). We understand them initially as discursive or social sites that juxtapose and connect different logics and practices of order/ing. In our reading, this characteristic also constitutes them as ‘spaces of absurdity’. As such, heterotopias often produce disturbance and irritation (de Cock, 2000) – and, as Foucault notes in the preface of *The order of things* (1970), by extension and at times, laughter. Laughter commonly emerges when all taken for granted taxonomies, ‘ordered surfaces’, and ‘familiar landmarks of my thought’ (*ibid.*: xv) break, and conventions, sets of relations, words and things ‘that are inappropriate’ (*ibid.*: xvii) collide and erode.

That said, we want to highlight that heterotopias, as spaces encompassing otherness and elements of absurdity, do not inevitably liberate from dependencies and constraints (Dumm, 2002). Their potential to – verbally, visually or physically – interrupt, play with and re-create dominant orders and norms does not imply that heterotopias necessarily demonstrate ‘zones of freedom and full escape’ from power and domination (Topinka, 2010: 70). While other spaces are often ‘reserves of the imagination’, they are not external to, but infused by power and power’s disciplining and normalizing tendencies (Foucault, 1986: 27). We hence argue that heterotopias produce chances for effectively destabilizing and rethinking common ground and order(s) that appear given and ‘natural’. At the same time, however, heterotopias can potentially foster (subjection to) power and control (Dumm, 2002: 34). This ambiguity should, in our view, be acknowledged in the thinking and writing on heterotopias and their functioning.

In light of these elaborations, let us recapitulate: heterotopias are ‘alternative’, ‘altered’ and ‘alternating’ spaces that commonly interfere, break with and transgress the ‘architecture of the everyday’. In putting emphasis on the other sides of prevalent logics of order and structures of power, they reveal the contingency, multiplicity and relationality of the ‘familiar landmarks’ that shape our worlds and organizations and the experience thereof. On this basis, we intend to more systematically explore TP’s ‘city of absurdity’. Seen through the analytical lens of heterotopia, our study will point out how TP’s sites of

organizing emerge and are constituted on the basis of variegated, contested and juxtaposing 'other' orders, conventions and practices.

Spaces of other order and absurdity in *Twin Peaks*

Through the darkness of future past, the magician longs to see. One chants out between two worlds. 'Fire... walk with me'. (*Twin Peaks*, season one/episode two)



Figure 2: Map of Twin Peaks. Image drawn by David Lynch [<http://welcometotwinpeaks.com/locations/twin-peaks-maps/>].

The following discussion shows that TP is not a traditional 'whodunnit' (Hewitt, 1986/2009). Rather than providing clear and distinct motifs and answers, TP's world is concomitant with obscure, multifaceted and shifting motifs and reasons. By revisiting Foucault's six characteristics of heterotopias, we first illustrate how 'spaces of alternate ordering' work and what they look like in TP. Subsequently, we emphasize how the interruption and undermining of common order and sense, well-marked within TP, evokes absurdity in the practices, relations and conduct of the town's central characters.

The town's heterotopic sites

In TP we see a wide variety of heterotopias. The town illustrates that heterotopias are, first and foremost, *universal* (Foucault, 1986). The Great Northern Hotel, for instance, presents an interesting site of a heterotopia of deviance, i.e. a site that is characterized by practices and behavioural patterns that essentially differ from common norms, codes and conventions (Dumm, 2002: 39). Aside from being a place that lodges people like Special Agent Cooper, it is a place where salient characters get together and where 'anomalous activities' – most often with the consent of Benjamin Horne, hotel owner and business man – take place. The Roadhouse presents another 'heterotopia of deviance' which follows its own rules and codes of conduct and does not welcome everyone – as with One Eyed Jacks, the casino-brothel which is just across the border in Canada. Due to the forbidden rites and practices that occur there, it tends to present a 'heterotopia of crisis', mainly attended by people who are in a state of transition and change. The town's hospital is another 'space of otherness' where not everyone goes on a regular basis, and where the behaviour of the 'inmates' clearly deviates from 'normal' behaviour. Another interesting place is the Packard Sawmill. Its qualities of otherness are initially difficult to discern. For many TP inhabitants it is an ordinary place of work. However, there are also many secret and illegal activities that take place in the sawmill, to which not everyone gets access. Furthermore, there are several sites in TP that exist in-between the 'real' and the 'imaginary' (Davis, 2010). These other sites tend to open themselves up in dreams – the Red Room, the dark and evil Black Lodge, or the Ghostwood Country Club & Estate – a space in the business imagination of Benjamin Horne. That said, we note that most sites in TP are infused by twisted other orders. Yet there are sites in which other orders are eminently pronounced – for example in the Red Room, where there is only backwards talk and movement – and there are sites which present themselves as less (obviously) deviant and different, like the Double R Diner, the place where people get together, having 'damn good coffee' and cherry pie.

The functions – *raison d'être* (Foucault, 1986) – and use of heterotopias are also not static but can *change* over time (Dumm, 2002: 39). In TP, we mainly see this change of function in its symbolic heterotopias. The business fantasies surrounding the Ghostwood Country Club & Estate are, for instance, subject to constant modifications of focus and imagery; over the course of the action, this site seems to diverge from its short-term, profit-oriented focus and develop into a 'project' that is mainly interested in what can be referred to as 'alternative business'. Changes in symbolic sites in TP are, however, frequently linked to changes in physical sites. The Great Northern Hotel, for example, originally serves Benjamin Horne as a place from where he could initiate 'big business'

deals. At some point though, he starts to lose interest in such arrangements and instead gets involved in social endeavours, reflecting upon the question of how to 'make the world a better place'. We also notice other changes in the operations and organizing practices at the Great Northern. For example, we see how espionage enters the hotel. Audrey, Benjamin Horne's daughter, and Donna, Laura Palmer's best friend, are increasingly interested in secretive activities, which suggests that it is no longer Agent Cooper and the policemen alone who are engaged in detective work. However, changes of *raison d'être* can also be observed in other sites. As time passes we realize that some of TP's heterotopias lose their quality and intensity of 'difference and disturbance' and hence turn into more ordinary sites (see also Kornberger and Clegg, 2003). At the same time, we perceive the opposite development: sites like the Police Station show that ordinary and rather authoritative sites can also be transformed into spaces of otherness.

Following Foucault (1986), heterotopias are, moreover, *multiple spaces* where sites and orders meet that are normally kept separate. In drawing together 'places that are foreign to one another' (*ibid.*: 25), this characteristic makes heterotopias also appear as 'spaces of absurdity'. In TP, we frequently see a twinning and colliding of mundane *and* rather fictive and surreal sites and orders. The Great Northern is, in this context, once more illustrative: it is not only a hotel, a ballroom, conference center, a premise and living quarters; it is also a site from where several mysteries, secrets and sublime dreams and visions – like the one of the Ghostwood Country Club & Estate – emerge and disseminate. Similarly, TP's Police Station: it is the place officially responsible for solving crime, but it is also a place for friendship and affairs, *and* a place for 'thinking, perceiving and acting differently', as for example Cooper's investigation method of 'mind-body coordination' suggests. As such, TP appears to be full of sites where orders connect that are commonly considered incompatible (Topinka, 2010). Often, it is the order of 'the good and pleasant' that interweaves with the order of 'evil and dark'. For instance, TP's mysterious woods present a heterotopic site that contains entry points to both good and evil orders. These orders are illustrated by the White and the Black Lodges, which are 'places of testing' and boundary crossing. While the White Lodge is a place of hope and possible relief, the Black Lodge, mainly mastered by the rules of 'evil Bob', is a site that emerges as notably opaque, bizarre and mysterious. Amongst other things, this is due to the language spoken: it is turned upside down, resulting in a full inversion of the common sense of grammar and syntax. That said, we observe that TP's woods appear to be unsettled. To us, this unsettledness mainly symbolizes the ongoing struggle of different intermingling orders and forces of power that shape TP and its various sites of organizing (Hetherington, 1997).

Another specific feature of heterotopias is that they are informed by and linked to different orders and layers of *time* (Dumm, 2002: 40). Commonly, they present temporal passages and are thus 'not oriented toward the eternal, but are rather absolutely temporal' (Foucault, 1986: 26). Looking at the world of TP, we instantly see a fusion of time layers in the Red Room, the White Lodge and the Black Lodge. These are mythical sites that occur in dreams or between realities and hence make a separation between past, present and future often impossible (Davis, 2010: 670). A giant who is moving in-between these spatio-temporal sites, while advising Cooper, can be seen as the embodiment of the colliding of different times in TP. The Ghostwood Country Club & Estate also adopts a position in-between the real and surreal. It aspires to step beyond its ghostly incarnation and create a 'time of realization' and enactment; yet this is 'work in progress'. Further, there are various physical spaces of so-called criss-crossed time. For instance, the Roadhouse where regular time stops for people. Here they can enjoy leisure time and forget their sorrows. The Great Northern presents another place where different times intersect, for example a time of rest and a time of business. As a place of entertainment, One Eyed Jacks is yet another site where times intersect and become intensified: there is a 'time of erotica', a 'time of gambling' and a 'time of good and bad luck'. Generally, we note that TP's sites of other ordering foster a non-linear, event-focused notion of time, and present the eroding of different times as anything but unusual (Kornberger and Clegg, 2003).

Heterotopias are, furthermore, *different* from all other sites that they reflect (Foucault, 1986). They follow their own logics of order/ing, and contain specific *entry-* and *exit-*mechanisms (Hetherington, 1997). In TP, we see sites of other organizing that follow very particular principles, codes of access and 'cleaning rituals'. Their 'deceptive entries' and 'illusory exits' are illustrated by various signs and symbols, for instance the trees which are in violent motion, or the traffic lights which constantly swing and thereby 'reflect the town's outward and inward self' (Odell and LeBlanc, 2007: 48). The twin peaks themselves also symbolize the borders and boundaries of the town; they connect, disconnect and tighten the locale. Another symbol, which highlights the entrance rules to sites of otherness, is the secret. TP is 'full of secrets' – and spying and control attempts are concomitantly widespread. At least this is what sites, where some of TP's characters lurk around, like the Police Station, the Great Northern or One Eyed Jacks with its surveillance cameras suggest. For instance, Audrey, who proves to be Cooper's informal 'assistant detective', specializes in using the secret places in the Great Northern, from where she eavesdrops on whoever conducts business. In a similar manner, Laura's former schoolmates Bobby, James and Donna turn into self-appointed detectives as time passes. In TP, complex surveillance and control practices are thus 'in play', regulating the entry and exit of its other sites.

However, this does not mean that these sites are isolated or simply enclosed (Dumm, 2002: 40). Even very secretive sites such as the Black Lodge reveal that, under certain conditions, spaces of other order open up and become accessible.

Finally, spaces of otherness do not exist on their own. As *relational sites*, heterotopias are connected to other social sites for which they have a function (Foucault, 1986). Sites in TP that are interlinked in complex ways are, for instance, the Great Northern, the Ghostwood Country Club & Estate, One Eyed Jacks, the Police Station, the Roadhouse and the Double R Diner. As to the function of the latter, we note that the coffeehouse serves as a mainly peaceful 'site of the day', where people can enjoy a cup of coffee and, while doing so, recover from or compensate for the daily 'travails' and pressures stemming from other, potentially more challenging, sites. The Double R is the central connecting site in TP as everybody, no matter where s/he comes from and to which 'business' s/he belongs, longs for its coffee and pie. However, there are also other 'spaces of compensation' in TP (Foucault, 1986). For example, One Eyed Jacks, which presents, in contrast to the Double R, a 'site of the night'. As such, it is a site where boundaries are and can be transgressed, and illegal desires and addictions, like sex or cocaine addictions, can be lived out. Nonetheless, One Eyed Jack remains connected to TP's other sites. What is more, it seems to allow some of these sites to operate in a more ordered manner. Therefore, we argue that in TP the 'order of the night' and the 'order of the day' – signifying order and dis-order – are mutually dependent on each other (Cooper, 1990). As for the question what or who exactly connects the town's different heterotopic sites and orders, we further, observe that connectors take on various forms – symbols, objects and subjects all act as connectors. On an imaginary plane, the dream is, for instance, a crucial connector in TP. There are revealing, yet often disturbing, dreams and visions, like those Cooper and Sarah Palmer, Laura's mother, have of 'evil Bob'. There are, besides, more re-creative – 'American' – dreams about the opportunities, empowerment and liberty life might generally offer. Either way, TP's dreams are not innocent, but have real, corporeal effects. On a related note, we see that there are various artifacts and objects in TP, informing the activities and relations at stake. We see, for instance, how coffee and donuts become these coveted objects which connect people – as does cocaine consumed by several inhabitants of TP, or Laura's ubiquitous picture as homecoming queen. There are, eventually, particular characters that operate as mediators between TP's sites of organizing, like Benjamin Horne, the Log Lady and, above all, Agent Cooper. With regard to Cooper, we observe that he operates in many respects like a 'shaman'; he sees everything with everything and everyone connected. Over the course of the action this results in Cooper merging with the world of TP (Blassmann, 1999).

The above discussion explored *Twin Peaks* through the six principles Foucault (1986) ascribes to heterotopias. On balance, we see in TP diverse spaces of otherness, namely, physical (e.g. the Great Northern), imaginary (e.g. the Black Lodge), as well as textual heterotopias (e.g. the backwards talk in the Red Room). What they share is their nature of ‘being different’: they are all composed of multiple, intermingling (dis)orders that frequently reverse and undermine common sense, uniform logic and rational reason. Our analysis thereby portrays TP as a ‘city of absurdity’. With that said, the following sub-section places its emphasis more explicitly on TP’s absurd elements, practices and modes of conduct. We will refer to TP’s central characters and show how their conduct is both informed by and constitutive of the absurdities integrative to TP’s spaces of alternate ordering and organizing. We will, furthermore, discuss some of the – *more or less precarious* – effects that potentially come along with the colliding and eroding of familiar orders and landmarks.



Figure 3: Cooper, Laura and the backwards dancing dwarf in the Red Room

Juxtaposing multiple orders: Prompting and sustaining absurdity

That rational, ordinary reason and conventions are contested and exist above all on the surface is in TP most obviously illustrated by the character and life story of Laura Palmer. Everyone wants to see the orderly pattern in the high-school homecoming queen, but Laura conducts a mysterious and precarious ‘phantom life’. That is to say, drugs, illicit sex, sadomasochism, and hints of devil worship are or were the hidden, yet real, highlights of Laura’s after-school life (Telotte,

1995: 162); a life that seems the inverse and mockery of uniform order, continuity and composure to which Laura, like some sort of 'vampire, returned by the light of day' (*ibid.*). In pointing to, amongst other things, the persistence, juxtapositioning and dynamic interference of the 'order of the day' and 'the order of the night', Laura's life – far from being innocent – evokes a first sense of the absurdities infusing the world of TP. This sense feels reinvigorated when we examine how Agent Cooper proceeds with the murder case and generally navigates through TP's sites of other order/ing.

Cooper's investigation practices notably challenge conventional ideas of work and organizing. While the work of F.B.I. agents is commonly informed by distinct orders and formal logic, Cooper's investigation is not guided by 'quasi-scientific principles'. Rather, he starts out with the premise that 'two and two do not always equal four'. Following the attempt to go beyond 'normal coding' and 'formulaic research' – namely in his work and life – Cooper, more specifically, applies an aesthetics- and spirituality-invested investigation technique which he refers to as the 'Tibetan method'. In putting emphasis on the principles of 'open seeking', intuition, dream-based guidance and bodily experience, the Tibetan method is meant to allow Cooper and the policemen the development of 'freedom from fear'. Cooper's genuine acknowledgement that indeterminacy, ambiguity and absurdity are vivid elements of the investigation is also reflected in his firm belief that 'the shortest distance between two points is not necessarily a straight line'. This belief also affects how Cooper treats so-called facts relevant to solving the murder case (Blassmann, 1999: 13). He relates to various 'data' sources and does not prioritize apparent 'rational' facts and reason over other sources of insight, such as intuition, feelings or affect. Cooper seems to have realized that there is no 'right', given or a-contextual knowledge, truth and meaning that could guide him through the 'jungle' of TP (see also Cooper and Law, 1995).

In twisting and undermining common meaning and convention(s), the unorthodox investigation methods Cooper utilizes, in part, invoke what Cooper and Pease (2002) have referred to as *comic absurdity*, i.e. absurdity that prompts laughter. In TP this is essentially triggered by circumstances in which 'pointedly absurd alterations' (Telotte, 1995: 165) and interruptions of 'normal' order(s), practice and conduct are presented as the most 'natural' thing (Lavery, 1995). A closer look at TP's 'multi-dimensional' characters, their extraordinary preferences and socially maladjusted behaviour further conveys this: Agent Cooper, for instance, is portrayed as somebody who discovers the world of TP, and the smells and flavours it provides, 'with the wonderment of an angel falling from the sky' (Chion, 1995: 110). He drinks a cup of hot coffee and enjoys a donut as if this were his first or last chance to do so. His highly developed enthusiasm for the world of TP also leads him to recite his every thought and activity into a

dictaphone. We thereby get the impression that, for instance, the movement of the trees and the practice of meditation are as important to Cooper and his investigation as are the results of the autopsy processed or the exchanges with other FBI agents. Another complex and bizarre character in TP is the Log Lady. She carries a log everywhere she goes; the log appears to be talking to her, and she operates as its ambassador. For the silent listener these dialogues appear confusing, 'supernatural' and thus difficult to 'decode'. Then there is Leland Palmer, one of TP's most hybrid figures. He plays golf in his living room, he dances and likes singing, preferably in the most inappropriate situations. Amongst other things, he is an entertainer, a lawyer and business man, an eccentric, a father – and a murderer. However, there are many more characters in TP that show eccentric and/or deviant behaviour: there is Benjamin Horne and his comical little brother Jerry, who are ecstatic in their praise for their baguettes with French brie, while – *en passant* – debating and fixing their next big business deals. There is policeman Andy, who cries and has a breakdown at the scene of any disaster, and there is one-eyed Nadine, whose entire energy goes into the creation of completely noiseless drape runners – before she has an accident and falls into a coma from which she awakens as a high-school girl with 'super strength' (Telotte, 1995: 165). The inhabitants of TP just take note of such sudden transformations – not more, not less.

This is only a small 'assortment' of the bizarre and exaggerated conduct and interactions of TP's salient inhabitants. Together with the various magnificently opaque small joys, depicted in ridiculous detail, they provoke the perception of absurdity that gives the series its very specific comicality (Lavery, 1995). However, it is also important to note that, in TP and its sites of (other) organizing, absurdity and thus the colliding and reversal of common sense, order and practice do not always prompt comic effects. In typical Lynchian manner, the break with the 'normal order of things' (*ibid.*: 11) is portrayed in TP as both comical *and* dark and mysterious (Murray, 1992/2009: 141; see also Westwood, 2004). Against this background we will yet examine TP's *darker* sides, thereby returning to TP's main story, its central character Cooper and the investigation he is charged with.

While the dynamic interweaving of different orders and forces, such as the normal and deviant, the good and evil, or the dark and the light, builds from the beginning an integral part of TP's 'city of absurdity', we observe that, over the course of the action, an increasing imbalance emerges between forces and practices that mainly order and connect, and forces that disorder and disconnect the sites in TP. Cooper and the police officer have the task and responsibility to restore 'order and law' in TP. However, we soon learn that they do not succeed in that regard. The solving of the murder case also does not help in restoring order;

somehow more and more problems start to emerge with the arrest of Laura's murderer – who is, as it turns out, her father Leland who was used as host by 'evil Bob'. A particular, destructive form of disorder and 'evil' has apparently threatened TP for a long time; and it seems that the interaction with, or the fight against, this dark order cannot be eliminated. While Cooper primarily acknowledges multiple juxtaposing meanings and orders and the general dynamics and contingency of the world (Tsoukas and Cummings, 1997), he struggles with and is irritated by those orders, forces and sites that he cannot understand, access or negotiate. This is shown by his handling of parasite Bob, who represents the supernatural, evil order in TP. Bob's power center is the Black Lodge, TP's darkest and most mysterious site (Blassmann, 1999: 44). For Cooper, this site is over-burdening. He can hardly counter-act its (dis)orders, which notably challenge his energy, optimism, empathy and inner strength. In consequence, he partly loses his 'freedom of fear', which he developed while being involved and active in other, more open and creative sites of other organizing (Hjorth, 2005).

As time passes, we observe that the dynamic power game between different orders in TP's sites is essentially disturbed by the town's dark forces. These forces weaken and threaten Cooper's position, his autonomy and integrity. In the last scene of TP we, indeed, observe Cooper looking into a mirror, and turning slowly into evil Bob. As Cooper tends to be the central mediator in TP and even its embodiment, these dark forces also threaten TP's sites of alternate ordering. Towards the end of the series it seems that some of these sites partly lose their quality of difference and otherness and, concomitantly, their potential to reverse, transgress and recreate dominant and dominating orders and forces of power (Foucault, 1986). We therefore conclude that the eroding of intertwining orders can be accompanied by precarious effects for sites of organizing and the individuals operating within and across them (Dumm, 2002).

By way of recapitulation: while destructive forces gain ground at the end of the story of TP, we see that 'what starts out as a mystery, still remains a mystery'. Instead of providing us with a consistent, linear storyline and a stable and uniform logic of order, TP provides us with a 'story of absurdity'. This means that TP presents an 'open narrative form' (Henry, 1999/2009) involving multiple 'other' orders and contested meanings which appear initially to not belong together, but ultimately do. Good and evil, comic and darkness, dreams and nightmares, real sites and supernatural sites – they all form ambiguous 'doppelganger' pairs that are bonded and relate to each other and, thereby, convey absurdity as an inherent element of TP and its sites of organizing (Telotte, 1995). With this in mind, we now want to discuss, and reflect in more detail, on the organizational implications of our analysis of TP's other sites and

orders. So, what does the latter mean and imply for our understanding of work and organization?

Otherness, multiplicity and absurdity as immanent in organization

Heterotopias are informed by the transgressions of their boundaries, by the enunciations they encourage and the contradictions they incite. We can see their effects everywhere we choose to look, but the question is whether we will so choose. (Dumm, 2002: 46)



Figure 4: Agent Cooper at the Double R Diner

Utilizing Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia, our analysis has focused on the TV series *Twin Peaks* as a means of exploring the interrelation between sites of organizing and absurdity. We have argued that TP presents a 'city of absurdity' in which most sites can be understood as spaces of alternate order/ing. As we have illustrated, spaces of otherness are commonly shaped by diversity and complexity as to their functions, operations and effects (Foucault, 1986). In 'juxtaposing unlike elements' (Dumm, 2002: 41) and 'deviating from the regular picture' (Breskin, 1990/2009: 85), they can 'open the possibility of new arrangements' (Dumm, 2002: 41) and modes of acting 'differently'. However, at the same time they can be challenging and constraining. Particularly in instances in which well-known orders and boundaries are fully disrupted and dissolved,

other spaces can, as shown, turn into sites of destabilization, marginaliation and potential de(con)struction (Kornberger and Clegg, 2003).

On a related note, we see that other sites transform in time and space and are relational in orientation. Despite their nature of being different they are linked to other sites and orders (Davis, 2010). In TP, we mainly observe a persistent intertwining and colliding of 'real' and 'surreal', imaginary sites and orders. Often concomitant with the breaking and subversion of uniform, rational order(s) is the perception of unsettlement and absurdity, which can, but does not necessarily, trigger laughter (Foucault, 1970: xv; Kavanagh and O'Sullivan, 2007). In any case, the explored intermingling and contestation of common orders and conventions leads to the realization that in 'real' life – and organizations – there is, as Audrey says, 'no algebra'. Through this insight, we also realize that it is not the straight paved roads, but the curved mountain paths that matter and that bring TP's story/ies and sites of organizing to life.

Hence, TP tends to be a 'maze' (Blassmann, 1999: 49) constituted of multiple, seemingly contradicting and obscure formulas, codes and landmarks (Westwood, 2004). This maze shapes and is shaped by TP's inhabitants, their practices and conduct, as most notably seen in the case of Cooper, TP's main character. Cooper is immediately absorbed by the atmosphere and aura of TP, as if there were a 'natural purity' to it. He deliberately allows the world of TP to connect with him and, over the course of the action, it acts parasitically on him and eventually swallows him. Cooper acting as a combination of private eye and cultural (and perhaps organizational) ethnographer, explores and 'learns about the community, learns more than it knows about itself' (Lavery, 1995: 13) and, through doing so, allows us to learn with him. It is thus Cooper who connects us, as viewers, with the world of TP. Through his embrace of the intertwining of order and disorder, real and surreal, comic and dark, we get the chance to perceive and be affected by the fundamental ambiguities and absurdities immanent in TP's sites. Put differently, in acknowledging the often absurd 'disturbances in the order of things' (Telotte, 1995), Cooper triggers our imagination of seeing, experiencing and thinking about order and organization in another way (see also Weiskopf, 2014).

Following Mauws and Phillips (1995: 634), good narrative fictions provide us with detailed and plausible life-worlds that are, at the same time, 'complex, ambiguous, unique, and subject to the situational logic, interpretation, resistance, and invention that characterize real organizations'. We consider the TV series TP as one such good fiction. Beyond presenting an extraordinary piece of art, it is also an insightful 'resource' in our quest to further understand how contemporary organizations work in their increasing complexity and obscurity

(Collinson, 2002). TP deals with a variety of organizational issues and phenomena, such as culture, power, surveillance, strategy and change. Yet the images it draws of organization and work are different from those we commonly encounter in organizational analysis (Foreman and Thatchenkery, 1996). In a powerful manner they challenge the notion of organization as a unitary entity composed of rational and homogeneous order and, instead, portray organization as a multiple, dynamic, frequently absurd and paradoxical practice and phenomenon (Kornberger and Clegg, 2003). In foregrounding the opaque pleasures and variegated struggles and strategies TP's inhabitants engage in, TP allows us to perceive organization and organizational sites in a vivid, critical light (Warren, 2008).

The intertwining play with and transgression of boundaries and limits that aim to define and distinguish 'normal' order(s) and conventions from abnormal and deviant order(s) are a significant and recurring element in the art work of David Lynch (Hewitt, 1986/2009: 31). In TP, this 'play', as for instance symbolized by the blinking traffic lights or the two peaks above TP, is presented as crucial for the emergence and development of the various stories, relations and sites 'at stake'. Translated into the context of organization, we can hence argue that the series' title *Twin Peaks* already reminds us of the complementary role of boundaries for all sites of organizing (Cooper, 1990). Boundaries are regulative forces that act as both connectors *and* dis-connectors (*ibid.*). Yet their operating is not to be understood in a linear, straightforward way. Rather, analyzed through the concept of spaces of otherness (Foucault, 1986), TP clearly evokes that what is defined and evaluated as organizational order and disorder, inside and outside, or rational and absurd, is not given, clear-cut and exclusive (Burrell, 1988). These distinctions and categories are provisional and contested *and* mutually dependent and constitutive of each other (Woodward, 1990/2009: 58; Foucault, 1970). Instead of considering organization as a practice of separating and opposing one category or thing to another (Dumm, 2002: 45), our heterotopia-informed study of TP thus allows us to refer to boundaries as a shifting 'between condition', putting organization in perspective as a creative assemblage that continuously relates and connects diverse, seemingly contrasting orders, practices and relations (Clegg et al., 2005: 154; Knights, 1997).

That said, our analysis suggests that organizations are complex and contested *processes* of 'social ordering' (Hetherington, 1997: viii) rather than stable, self-evident 'things' with distinct structures and properties (de Cock, 2000; Foucault, 1986). While 'the formal-cum-abstract mode of reasoning ... of the early organization theorists' (Tsoukas and Cummings, 1997: 668) hardly allows us to account for a dynamic, multifaceted and ambiguous social and organizational reality, we argue that organizational analyses based on concepts like heterotopia

can account for this. In the light of heterotopic analysis organization emerges as an *ambiguous* 'space for play, movement and disclosure' that 'invites' us to reconsider and experiment with organizational orders, limits and limitations (Hjorth, 2005; see also Cooper and Law, 1995). More specifically, the application of the concept of heterotopia reveals that organization is *as much* about the creation of 'disruptions with normalising and regulating forces' (Hjorth, 2005: 396) – and thus about complexity – as it is about attempts to impose order and regulations and, in that way, attempts to reduce complexity (Dumm, 2002). Through going beyond organization's constraining, unifying and disciplinary sides and thus the common 'obsession with order and control' (Burrell, 1988), we claim that the concept of heterotopia holds the potential to contribute to a thinking and knowing of organization that is informed by creativity, complexity and multiplicity (Kornberger and Clegg, 2003).

With this in mind, we want to return, one more time, to our study of TP. Fundamentally, we consider TP to be an embodiment of 'alternate order/ing' that allows us to *experience* social and organizational life as varied, ambiguous and, in many ways, absurd. As a piece of film art it favours and 'replaces dry knowingness with enthusiasm' (de Cock, 2000: 603) and imaginative thinking. The heterotopic analysis of TP as a 'city of absurdity' 'in which elements of existence otherwise unconnected to each other connect' (Dumm, 2002: 39) enables us to vividly question and subvert unitary, representational notions of order and organization (Clegg et al., 2005). With its emphasis on the *qualities* of other ordering and organizing, our analysis, in fact, suggests that heterogeneity, difference and absurdity should be considered constitutive 'elements of organizational existence' (Foucault, 1970). In TP, organization tends to happen through 'interconnecting yet heterogeneous actions' (Cooper and Law, 1995: 246) and through playing with and crossing the boundaries of any, seemingly given, order – not through staying within them (Dumm, 2002: 44).

This nexus is most notably expressed by the unconventional investigation, organizing and management practices of Agent Cooper. These are deeply informed by spirituality and sensuality and, as such, exist beyond and challenge rational, mechanistic and calculative thinking as to work and organization. In his investigation, Cooper does not operate on the basis of traditional dualisms (Knights, 1997); he does not make hierarchical distinctions between 'facts and fiction', real and surreal, rational reason and affect or intuition. Hence, there is no order or source of insight that can claim to be the right or true one for the investigation. Rather, Cooper combines different knowledge sources and practices in his work; this provides him with a certain autonomy and scope that enables him to maneuver through TP's *mêlée*. More generally in TP, strategies at – and outside – work are portrayed as variegated and loosely coupled; they

emerge, interweave and change depending on the situations, territories and social encounters TP's inhabitants are involved in and with. In TP 'everyone seems to become a detective', and vivid lateral interventions in strategies and the general course of action seem to be more prominent than authoritatively imposed orders and prescriptions. Power thus seems to be in 'the hands of many', undermining the existence or development of a monolithic, stable and clearly locatable center of power (Topinka, 2010). We note that, as a consequence, TP's modes of organizing are complex, shifting, intuition-oriented and frequently absurd. Practices of 'other' organizing and managing (such as the 'bordello-business' practices in One Eyed Jacks or the 'Tibetan investigation methods') essentially attack and mock common ideas of organization as being about consistency, logic, abstract planning, long-term strategies, external programming or fixation.

This returns us to our premise that there is a *comical* element to the breaking and colliding of familiar orders and modes of ordering (e.g. things and words) – and, thus, to absurdity (Cooper and Pease, 2002; Foucault, 1970). In TP, the comical reversal and disturbing of 'habitual ways of ordering reality' (Westwood, 2004: 789) are both 'natural' and pivotal to the emergence and development of its sites of other organizing. We are, however, aware that, beyond the world of TP, the juxtaposing of 'alternative perspectives on reality' (Rhodes and Westwood, 2007: 6) is often assessed as a challenge and threat to order and organization (Kenny and Euchler, 2012). With these contexts in mind, we need to be aware of the complex and sometimes unsettling side effects that can accompany absurdity as a form of humour and as a vital element of organization. In persistently undermining rational reason and the formal logic of order, absurdity exposes the 'other' side, the 'supplement' of ordered reality (Cooper and Rease, 2002). Its critical-reflexive potential lies then in its capacity to 'open up', 're-frame' and give visibility to organizational issues and challenges that are routinely rather 'unspeakable' (Critchley, 2007). However, as illustrated with reference to TP's sites of alternate order/ing, absurdity is neither necessarily comical nor solely critical and subversive 'in nature'. As with other forms of humour, absurdity can empower and liberate *and* constrain and discipline. Its very basis is thus ambivalence (Palmer, 1987: 213; Butler, 2015). With regard to contemporary organizations, which are seemingly infused by ludicrous elements and practices, this means that absurdity as a particular form and aspect of humour certainly has 'a place in the picture' (Murray, 1992/2009: 144). However, 'where that place is and where it isn't' (*ibid.*), and how it is played out (Collinson, 2002) – tends to remain contested and dynamic.

Conclusion

Using the example of *Twin Peaks*, examined through a heterotopic lens, this paper has explored the nexus of absurdity and sites of (other) organizing. In our analysis, we have illustrated that TP is full of alternate orders and sites which are, despite their otherness, relational and thus interlinked in variegated ways (Foucault, 1986; Kornberger and Clegg, 2003). While sites of otherness transform in time and space and can, as has been shown, be imaginative and (re)creative and/or de(con)structive and constraining (Hetherington, 1997), they unanimously challenge idealizing, abstract images of organizational sites as uniform, distinct, stable and clear-cut (Hjorth, 2005). In TP's sites we observe an ongoing questioning of, intermingling of and struggling over distinctions and categories such as order and disorder, 'good' and 'bad', normal and abnormal, or comic and dark (Dumm, 2002: 42; Cooper, 1990). Therefore, our heterotopia-informed study of TP as a 'city of absurdity' suggests that social and organizational orders, codes and conventions are diverse, provisional, and often fragile and obscure (de Cock, 2000). Far from being calculative and controlled unities of order, TP's sites of other organizing illustrate that organizations are multifaceted and dynamic assemblages where apparently opposing, yet complementary, orders, practices and 'elements exist simultaneously' (Foreman and Thatchenkery, 1996: 59; Cooper and Law, 1995).

Finally, in the light of these insights, we want to highlight that, as an art form, the medium of film and TV provides us with a rich chance to heighten the 'other', absurd and ludicrous aspects of social and organizational life (Cooper and Pease, 2002; Westwood and Rhodes, 2007). More generally, the medium allows us to gain a sensitive and critical understanding of the complex processes of organization and organizing (Hancock, 2005). This seems to be of particular value if one agrees with Telotte (1995: 164) that the ways we usually speak about our organizational world 'seem ill-suited to the ghost-like shifts' in TP, which 'strike at the meaningfulness, or the potential for meaning, we assume' (*ibid.*). Indeed, TP, which is full of unresolved mysteries, otherness and absurdity, left us with a nagging question: can we accept, in our lives, our workplaces, organizations and in our representations thereof a 'different vision of order, one that includes, even embraces, disorder, or must we have things neatly arranged, like stacks of sugared donuts, a sweet "police-man's dream", a dream of order?' (*ibid.*: 171-2).

This paper has examined Lynch's *Twin Peaks* through Foucault's (1986) still under-explored and under-utilized concept of heterotopia to sustain and further advance discussions of the 'other', seemingly 'disordered' and 'disturbing' sides and qualities of organizations. Its intention is to contribute to OS with regard to

alternate order(ing) and organization (Cooper, 1990; Kornberger and Clegg, 2003; Hjorth, 2005), as well as to studies on organizational humour (Butler, 2015; Westwood and Rhodes, 2007) and, more specifically, absurdity as a form of humour (Cooper and Pease, 2002). Essentially, our analysis of TP's 'city of absurdity' aims to encourage the development of a 'heterotopic sensibility', i.e. a sensibility for 'thinking difference' and 'thinking differently' (Johnson, 2006). Such a sensibility allows us to acknowledge and affirm the contingent juxtaposing and intertwining of multiple, contested and sometimes unsettling and absurd elements and (dis)orders as being immanent to and constitutive of organization, the practice of organizing and, following Foucault (1986), the practice of imagination, creativity – and freedom.

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