

## ***Death and the Penguin: Modularity, alienation and organizing***

### **Abstract**

The originality of this paper lies in the ways in which it explores how the depiction of organized crime within Andrey Kurkov's novel *Death and the Penguin* can inform our understanding of organizational modularity. This non-orthodox approach might open up new avenues of thought in the study of organizational modularity while further illustrating how novelistic worlds can inform accounts of organizational realities. Two main research questions underlie the paper. How can Andrey Kurkov's novel further our understanding of the complexity of organizational worlds and realities by focusing our attention on different landscapes of organizing? How does Kurkov's novel help us grasp the concept of modularity by drawing attention to new forms of modular organization? Drawing from our reading of Kurkov's novel, we explore organizational modularity as depicted by Kurkov (2003) and then we delve into the themes of alienation and isolation with respect to modular organizing.

### **Key words**

organization, organized crime, modularity, fiction, alienation

**Word count: 8925**

### **Introduction**

The forces of globalization, the digitalization of society and an ever-greater sense of competitiveness worldwide have increasingly challenged bureaucratic forms of organization (Courpasson and Reed 2004; Pulignano and Stewart 2006), with flexibility, adaptability and dynamicity enacted as highly valued competencies at the workplace (Kallinikos 2003; Marsden 2004) in both the private and the public sector. The retreat of bureaucratic forms of organizing, sometimes criticized for their lack of responsiveness to complex and ever-changing economic environments (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), has been paralleled by the advance of alternative, so called ‘post-bureaucratic’, logics of organizing (Grey and Garsten 2001; Heckscher 1994). Within the post-bureaucratic rhetoric, various forms of organisation have emerged, such as the networked organisation (Morton 1991), the virtual corporation (Davidow and Malone 1992), the project-based organisation (Hodgson 2004) and the modular organisation. The notion of modularity has been deployed in a variety of academic fields and is a central concept in the management literature (D’Adderio and Pollock 2014). While the notion of modularity (especially product design modularity) has received a lot of attention in the management literature, research on organizational modularity remains limited (Campagnolo and Camuffo 2010). We can define a modular system or organization as ‘composed of units (or modules) that are designed independently but still function as an integrated whole’ (Baldwin and Clark 1997, 86). As noted by Hirst and Humphreys (2015, 1536), modularity is ‘deeply embedded in the modern institutional landscape, and underpins the articulation between different domains’.

The consequences of the introduction of modular logics of organizing have seldom been explored with respect to the position of employees in such organizations. The adoption of modular logics has tended to place emphasis on adaptability, independence and

enhanced flexibility; however, these practices have changed the nature of work (Kallinikos 2004) by placing considerable demands on employees to exert greater self-control and self-organization of their work-related activities (Clarke 2008). In the image of the modular man developed by Gellner (1994), employees increasingly need ‘the ability to compartmentalize thought and action into separate modules which can be deployed flexibly’ (Hirst and Humphreys 2015, 1533). At present, such modularity of existence remains underexplored in the management literature. It has, however, featured prominently in accounts of the organization of espionage (Philby 1968) and (organized) criminal enterprise (Gambetta 1993; Jenkins 1992; Quinones 2016; Reuter 1985). We will focus on a specific depiction of organized crime in this paper.

The originality of this paper lies in the ways in which we explore how the depiction of organized crime within Andrey Kurkov’s novel *Death and the Penguin* might inform our understanding of organizational modularity. We believe that this unorthodox approach opens up new avenues of thought in the study of organizational modularity while further illustrating how novelistic worlds can inform accounts of organizational realities. In this respect we follow in the steps of Czarniawska-Joerges and de Monthoux (2005) in reconciling literary and organizational interpretation. We do so to pose two main research questions. First, seeking to explore the complex and fascinating relationship between novels and organizations, we ask: How can Andrey Kurkov’s novels further understanding of the complexity of organizational worlds and realities by focusing attention on different landscapes of organizing? Second, with a more specific concern with the concept of organizational modularity: How can Kurkov’s novel help us grasp the concept of modularity differently by drawing attention to new forms of modular organization? The organization depicted by Kurkov upon which our

exploration of modularity is based is the post-Soviet mafia (for the use of this term see Varese 2011, 6), which we explore as an organizational phenomenon (Granter 2017; Hortis 2014; Parker 2012).

Our paper contributes to two distinct fields: on the one hand, that which seeks to investigate the insights literature brings to the study of organizational worlds (see Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux 2005; De Cock 2000) and on the other, research specifically exploring the notion of modularity in organizations (for an extended literature review see Campagnolo and Camuffo 2010). Through the paper, we illustrate how a novel can expand our knowledge of modularity by developing different images of modularity to those commonly encountered in mainstream management and organization literature. Our reading of modularity speaks to Adler's (2012) focus on the ambivalence of bureaucracy, by highlighting both the possibilities and shortcomings of modular organisations. Modular organization, we argue, produces a form of workplace alienation different to that enacted by bureaucratic organizations.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of the management literature that has engaged with the concept of modularity. This includes a discussion of how the concept is related to organized crime. We follow this with a concise review of the literature investigating the rich and productive relationship between fiction and the field of organization studies. The fourth section consists in a summary of Kurkov's novel *Death and The Penguin*. Drawing from our reading of Kurkov's novel, we first explore organizational modularity as depicted by Kurkov (2003) and then we delve into the themes of alienation and isolation with respect to modular organizing. The conclusion outlines the contributions of this paper.

## **Modularity and the Organization**

In their review of the concept of modularity in the field of management, Campagnolo and Camuffo (2010) distinguish between three main streams of literature with respect to the concept of modularity: product design modularity (Fixson 2005; Ulrich 1995), production system modularity (Takeishi 2002) and organizational design modularity (Hoetker 2006; Simon 2002). Within the third stream, a number of papers have sought to apply the notion of modularity to organizations as a whole (see Djelic and Ainamo 1999; Helfat and Eisenhardt 2004; Worren et al. 2002).

Modularity may offer various advantages. By adopting a modular logic of organizing, organizations can reconcile flexibility and cost efficiency (Djelic and Ainamo 1999), while demonstrating greater reactivity to change (Nadler and Tushman 1999). Furthermore, modularity allows for the manageability of complexity (Baldwin and Clark 2000), enabling organizations to maintain a high degree of innovation (Simon 1996), as well as improving product quality (Shamsuzzoha et al. 2010). It has also been argued that modularity contributes to simplifying organizational processes and practices (Pandremenos et al. 2009). It is worth noting that, in the field of management, the majority of research on modularity is industry-based. Our study of modularity through novelistic rather than primary research and consulting encounters provides a different ways of engaging with the concept. In a work of fiction, we find that modularity emerges in more existentially relevant terms.

*The mafia and organizational modularity*

Parallels between criminal organisations and their ‘legitimate’ counterparts have been drawn since the 1970s if not before and various scholars have demonstrated how similar logics underlie both mainstream organizations and mafias (Arlacchi 1988; Cederström and Fleming 2016; Gambetta 1993; Gond, Palazzo, and Basu 2009; Granter 2017; Parker 2012; Saviano 2008; Stohl and Stohl 2011). We embrace this logic by positioning mafias, including that around which Kurkov’s novel revolves, as an instance of a modular organization (see Baldwin and Clark 1997, 2000).

Popular understandings of mafias are perhaps influenced by the media, and by the ‘discovery’ of the American mafia in the 1960s as a nationwide, hierarchically structured and organizationally disciplined conspiracy complete with organigrammes and a de-facto board of directors (Varese 2010, 4). As Varese (2010) has noted however, scholarly conceptualisations have evolved and given rise to different paradigms relating to the form taken by mafia groups. In the 1970s as noted above, the ‘crime as business/business as crime’ paradigm began to dominate, with notions of ‘illegal enterprises’ and fluid and temporary coalitions rather than monolithic organizations (Block 1980; Reuter and Rubinstein 1978; Smith 1980). Scholars such as Reuter (1985) and Kelly (1999, 12) note that criminal business is incompatible with bureaucratic control due to the necessity of restricting information flows and indeed, written evidence. It is also more operationally efficient to decentralise and capitalise on the talents and initiatives of more dispersed individuals and groups, rather than attempt a command and control model from the top down. Guerrero-Gutiérrez writes of (Mexican) crime cartels as ‘dynamic organizations with a high adaptation capacity’ (2011, 38) where risk is reduced by outsourcing activities. If members of ‘cells’ are arrested, they can *say* little about the cartel overall, because they *know* very little.

Colombian cartels use a similar ‘modular approach’ for their operations in the USA (Williams and Savona 1996, 19). Sicilian ‘men of honour’ claim not to even know to which ‘family’ others belong (Gambetta 1993, 123). Of course, further evidence of the mafia’s modular nature is the existence of highly autonomous sub groups within the supposed larger organisation, such as mafia clans and families within the cultural, economic and quasi-political governance structure of the mafia as a whole.

The modular nature of organised crime has been emphasised most strongly perhaps by the network theory of criminal enterprise. Here, organised crime, similarly to the post-bureaucratic organization, comprises “‘a flexible order” whose structural arrangements are lighter on their feet than “slow moving” hierarchies and are quick to adjust to changing situations and opportunities’ (Varese 2010, 8). Post Soviet mafias for example, are able to seek out opportunities (for investment, money laundering, partnerships with other mafias) on a global scale. Russian, Georgian, Ukrainian mafiosi can set up cells in Rome, Budapest, or New York, bringing with them, or acquiring their own ‘project team’ with diverse skills and specialisms (Varese 2011, 65-86).

While mafias are characterised by considerable modular autonomy it would be stretching credibility to describe them merely as networks or ephemeral ‘enterprises’. In mafias at least, there is a system of rules, grievance procedures and initiation rituals, encompassed within a hierarchy of some form. Modular they may be, but mafias are more than the sum of their parts and are characterized by their own form of ‘corporate governance’ (Varese 2010, 14) in order to manage members’ often competing interests and to reproduce the group as a sustainable economic *and* cultural and political entity over time (Varese 2017, 69-103).

The tension between coherent and identifiable hierarchy and cellular, modular form is highlighted by the fate of individual members or associates (the most elementary module) who are considered to know too much about the organization (Tondo 2015); they are, to borrow an old Soviet expression, 'liquidated'. This applies also to external threats, although a different modus operandi is employed. While the mafioso is kept close to the organization until the moment he is killed by a colleague, those destined to become 'illustrious corpses' due to their knowledge of, and fight against the mafia are progressively alienated from their institutional support structure before being eliminated (Dickie 2004, 385; Stille 1995, 69-70). Ultimately, mafiosi may be allowed to think for themselves, but disobeying orders can prove fatal. Such contradictions mean a life of constant danger, of constant anxiety (Nuzzi and Antonelli 2010, 39-42).

### **Literary and Organizational worlds**

In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur (1992, 159) notes that literature provides 'an immense laboratory for thought experiments'. Such a statement highlights the promises of engaging with literary works within the broader context of social sciences (see Praver (1976) on Marx's literary influences, for instance). In this vein, novels and literary works have come to occupy an ever-greater role in the understanding of the complexity of organizations and organizing (Czarniawska-Joerges and de Monthoux 2005; De Cock 2000; De Cock and Land 2005; Land and Sliwa 2009; Phillips 1995). Insights gleaned from novels' imaginative capacities challenge the thinness of formalist and rational accounts of organizations (see Knights and Willmott 1999; Sliwa and Cairns 2007). Novels can be read as quasi-ethnographies (Czarniawska 2009),



providing rich, detailed and thick empirical accounts relevant to the exploration of fragmented organizational realities (Rhodes and Brown 2005).

Unsurprisingly, Franz Kafka has been a central figure in this attempt to produce ‘an anthropology of organizations that includes literary work’ (Czarniawska 2009, 366). As noted by Munro and Huber (2012, 24), ‘Kafka is perhaps the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’s most profound commentator on organizational life’. For Parker (2005, 160) Kafka offers insight through ‘darkly fantastic representations of work and organizations’. A plethora of organizational research articles engaging with the dense and polymorphic literary work of Kafka accords with this insight (Clegg, Cunha, Munro, Rego, and de Sousa 2016; Hodson et al. 2013; Keenoy and Seijo 2009; Kornberger, Clegg, and Carter 2006; McCabe 2004; Rhodes and Westwood 2016; Warner 2007). While Kafka’s influence on the rethinking of organizational processes and practices is clear, others have also been instrumental in the unfolding of organizational intricacies. For instance, Rhodes (2009) draws from Charles Bukowski’s *Factotum* to explore the theme of resistance within organizations; Beyes (2009) uses Pynchon’s novel, *Against the day*, to produce a critique of capitalist organizing; Sliwa et al. (2012) draw from Muramaki’s novel, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, to reflect on leadership; Patient et al. (2003) use Russo’s novel, *Straight Man*, to study envy in organizations; Prasad (2014) draws on James’ *50 Shades of Grey* series to explore the intersections of hedonism, desire, and transgression while Sliwa and Cairns (2007) highlight the insights to be found in the literary works of Aldous Huxley and Milan Kundera. This list is by no means exhaustive but it does illustrate the complex and polymorphic connections charted between literary and organizational worlds.

Engagement with literary works takes many different directions. De Cock and Land (2006) identify three different ways in which the domains of literature and organization studies have become intertwined in the study of organizational worlds. First, using the tools of literary inquiry and criticism to reform the field of organization studies (O'Connor 1995; Rhodes 2000); second, resorting to literary modes of representation in the articulation of organizational knowledge (i.e. exploring the implications of positioning the writing of organizational accounts as a literary genre) (Watson 2000); third, drawing from the so-called 'great tradition' (Leavis 1948, 17) of literature, even while extending the cannon, interrogating it for its 'vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity' in order to develop organizational theory and morally improve managerial practices (De Cock 2000; Knights and Willmott 1999).

The present paper seeks to explore how Kurkov's novel *Death and The Penguin* may offer an alternative way of engaging with organizational worlds and realities, more particularly, with the concept of modularity, while also dealing with displacement, emphasizing how novels can open up new spaces of inquiry for management scholars. With respect to the ways in which the reading of the text unfolds, this paper engages with the notion of 'lay reading', as defined by DeVault (1990). Lay reading seeks to break from classical interpretive traditions of novel reading and analysis, thus setting aside the authority of the expert reading in order to open up a range of possibilities in reading literary works. Importantly, this does not entail a naïve reading of the text (Sliwa and Cairns 2007), one that is literal; rather, the text opens a plethora of interpretations, connections and relationalities. Reading always has a 'situated character' (DeVault 1999, 105): any text can be read and interpreted in many different ways, leading to an

engagement with completely different sets of ideas and problems. No reading is ever a definitive interpretation; all reading is active, enacting particular sense in particular contexts; this reading of *Death and the Penguin* is no exception.

### ***Death and the Penguin: Introducing the novel***

In *Death and The Penguin*, first published in Russian in 1996, Kurkov explores post-Soviet reality in the mid 1990s. Kurkov (2003) composes a social satire in the wake of the collapse of Soviet Communism and the uncontrolled flows of capitalistic relations that are colonizing Ukrainian society. The novel is not assembled around rich descriptions, profound psychological analyses or tormented characters but weaves a sense of unpredictability, irrationality and ultimately fatality. In this sense it can be considered as crime fiction in the distinctively amoral and anomic post-Soviet ‘boevik’ genre (see Borenstein 2008, 159-194). While there is a certain Kafkaesque dimension to *Death and The Penguin*<sup>1</sup>, Kurkov (2003) is not concerned with bureaucratic organizations (in the manner of Kafka) and the complex organizational networks in which the story is embedded do not resemble a bureaucracy.

Kurkov (2003) narrates the story of Viktor Alekseyevich Zolotaryov, a failing short-story writer in Kiev. He shares his life with a penguin, Misha - saved from starvation at the bankrupt local zoo. This penguin is, like Viktor, in a constant state of depression and poor health. Viktor’s world changes abruptly when he receives a call from the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is particularly noticeable with respect to the growing feeling of paranoia that dictates many of Viktor’s actions and by the strong sense of surrealism and absurdity that underlies the novel.

editor-in-chief of *Capital News*, offering him a lucrative opportunity writing obituaries. The particularity of his job resides in writing creative obituaries (called *obelisks*) of people who are still alive. Viktor is told to choose ‘important’ people in the news as subjects of his obituaries.

Viktor’s life seems to take a positive turn, as his work brings in large amounts of money - crucial in a society where relationships are well and truly reduced to the ‘cash nexus’. After some time and much to his satisfaction, his first obelisk finally gets published, even though the circumstances surrounding the death of that man remain particularly obscure. Following the publication of this first obelisk, Viktor receives a call from the editor-in-chief asking him to be on his guard.

When ‘Misha-non-penguin’ – a typically shady character – leaves his young daughter in Viktor’s care and then disappears, he seems to accept this puzzling reality without too much resistance and Sonya becomes part of a domestic set-up that if not quite a ‘haven in a heartless world’, is certainly more comfortable. Viktor employs a nanny to help care for the child, and she (Nina) soon becomes his lover. Professionally however all is not well as his subjects continue to die under mysterious circumstances. Viktor comes to understand that he has been assembling a list of targets for the mafia. Through his obituary-writing activities, he has become embroiled in the network of mobsters and politicians that run most aspects of daily life in Ukraine - a country Kurkov depicts as the quintessential ‘society of rackets’ (Granter 2017). While worrying evidence of his entanglement piles up, Viktor seems comforted by the editor in chief’s recurrent mention of ‘unseen and unknown’ protection, without which he would probably already be dead.

A turning point in the novel occurs when the editor-in-chief, concerned for his own security, calls Viktor to his office. Once there, Viktor finds a stack of his obelisks with a note stating 'approved', along with a date. The term 'processed' appears on the obelisks that had already been dealt with. Late in the story, Viktor enquires about the purpose of his work, only for the editor to tell him that such knowledge would prove deadly - to Viktor.

Not in a position to refuse, Viktor and Misha become invited fixtures at a series of mob funerals and the penguin soon eclipses his human companion as a macabre sort of mascot. Much to the annoyance of Viktor, Misha earns more money than him into the bargain. However, Misha becomes seriously ill and Viktor learns that he needs an expensive heart transplant operation to survive and that the heart of 3-4 year old child would be ideal. Viktor hesitates, but the person who has been inviting Misha to mob funerals (Lyosha) promises to take care of everything and Viktor learns that 'the boys' (whoever they might be) will be taking care of the financial aspect of the surgery and are also looking for a transplant for Misha.

In the meantime, Nina tells Viktor about an unfamiliar man asking questions about Viktor. Viktor follows him back to his flat where, holding the stranger at gunpoint, he learns that this man will actually be his successor in writing obelisks and that he is currently writing Viktor's obituary. In his own obituary, Viktor is described as 'obsessed with a need to cleanse society' (Kurkov 2003, 218) and so much of the blame relating to the many deaths connected to the obelisks is placed on him. Viktor also learns through his obituary that Misha has been saved with the transplant of a heart from a young boy who was in a terminal condition. Victor now recalls what the editor-in-chief

told him when he inquired about the specifics of his work: ‘when you do know what’s what, it will mean there no longer is any real point to your work or to your continuing existence’ (Kurkov 2003, 220). Facing death at the hands of a powerful criminal network about which he now knows too much, Viktor takes Misha’s place on a prearranged flight to Antarctica. He flees, literally, to the ends of the earth.

### **Modularity, Alienation and the Organization**

The organization with which Viktor becomes associated through his obelisk-writing activities does not revolve around a fixed, distinct structure. On many levels, and as noted before, the modular organization depicted by Kurkov differs greatly from bureaucratic forms of organization (as typically portrayed by Kafka). One such example is the contrasting ways in which both forms of organization react to internal dysfunctionality and problems. A bureaucratic organization is typically described as very linear in the ways it operates and if an issue occurs at one stage, such as a bottleneck, it can jeopardize the whole system. Linearity with respect to patterns of action is an echo of a wider temporal linearity in bureaucratic organizations premised on Chronos: order, precedence and sequence – all are important. Modular organizations are more efficient when it comes to handling uncertainties and difficulties (Baldwin and Clark 2000; Simon 1996) because linearity is not to be found in modular organizations: the failure of one module does not compromise the others, so that if Viktor fails at his task, another obelisk writer can simply replace him (or another module may emerge). Furthermore, modularity allows almost full simultaneity between different actions; for instance, Viktor’s obelisk-writing activities can be concomitant with the murder of the person related to that obelisk, thus highlighting the ways in which actions can overlap

and unsettle sequential and ordered logics in modular organisations. We can also note that the linearity of time is challenged by the fact that one's obituary is written before one's death, at least where the death is one to be marked publically: such obituaries are typically ready for publication when the subjects' action ceases to be.<sup>2</sup>

Kafka produced a strong critique of bureaucratic forms of organization by drawing our attention to the innumerable inconsistencies and dead-ends underlying them (Kornberger, Clegg, and Carter 2006; Parker 2005). Where Weber raised the rationality of bureaucracy to an ultimate value, Kafka sought to unveil the irrationality of bureaucratic organizations. Kurkov (2003) inhabits a quite different ideational universe. While Weber and Kafka may have seen things very differently there is little doubt that they were both orienting to similar organizational devices. Despite some fundamental differences underlying the ways in which bureaucratic and modular organizations operate, Kurkov (2003) – just as Kafka on bureaucracy (see Kafka 2015) – is keen to put the spotlight on the many inconsistencies, ambiguities and incongruities underlying modular forms of organizing. An assembly of rhetorically ironical images gravitate around Viktor and his world whose echoes are familiar to us: hospitals, where elders die unattended; country houses protected by minefields; young mobsters driving expensive cars in a grim economic environment; amusement and lack of surprise concerning the presence of a penguin in central Kiev, etc.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Occasionally the causality is reversed: for instance, in Sept. 6, 1871, *The New York Times* ran Karl Marx's obituary. There was just one problem: The original Marxist was still very much alive and remained so for a further 11 years.

<sup>3</sup> While, even the anxious readers of the popular press, such as the *Daily Mail*, might find the idea of a minefield around a country house unusual they might not find the presence of the penguin surprising (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4042674/The-true-story-eccentric-British-teacher-penguin-best-pals-bird-rescued-oil-slick.html>).

By emphasising the multiplicity of images connected to the activities of the mafia organization, Kurkov (2003) shows how a modular organization does not necessarily appear in the image of rational sensemaking and opens up a world of uncertainties and possibilities. While this is not explicitly the focus of this research paper, there is a certain interest in looking at the differences between bureaucratic and modular organizations in relation to Kurkov's novel, as former Soviet countries relied extensively on bureaucratic modes of organizing (Deroy and Clegg 2015; Grabher and Stark 1997). In that sense, Kurkov's novel seeks to capture some of the changes connected with a transition towards 'post-bureaucratic' and more market-based logics of organizing, a shift that has received much attention in different literatures.

As we have suggested, while Kurkov's writing appears rather Kafkaesque, drawing on a similar gallery of existential angst, anomie and animals, the organizing devices are quite dissimilar. There is an absence of a labyrinthine bureaucracy; instead, there is a strong sense of a personal relation at the core of organizing. The office of the editor-in-chief is active as a fulcrum for this modular organization inasmuch as the editor is seen to coordinate some of the activities of the mobsters. In that sense, the mafia modular organization as depicted by Kurkov (2003) seems to be primarily a 'space-less' form of organizing or rather a form of organizational design in which spatialities need to be performed and enacted on specific occasions. As such, it is the relationalities enacted through the ways in which different modules become connected in the performance of certain actions that defines them as places. Many different places become associated with the activities of the mobsters (e.g. the house of a corrupted deputy; isolated warehouses where illegal merchandise is stored; government offices; the headquarters of an established newspaper, etc.). While the organization reaches into all these sites



there is not a stabilized form of spatiality associated with its modular logic of organizing. The blurriness of the boundaries of the organization is evident through these various different sites. In certain ways, the blurriness of the boundaries of modular organizations seems to be compensated by the presence of an established pattern of hierarchy broadly following task allocations: a boss, counsellors, mid-ranking members, soldiers and a group of people more or less closely connected to the mobsters that occasionally get involved in mafia activities.

Yet again, this image needs to be nuanced: if modular organizations present flatter hierarchies (Campagnolo and Camuffo 2010) – which can be observed through the casualness of the exchanges between Viktor and his ‘boss’ – members of a modular organization possess very little (if any) information relating to other modules constituting the organization. Managing in the dark is the norm. Viktor knows that his editor-in-chief occupies a more senior position than he does in the organization but he does not know who is at its head or what other people occupy a similar position to that of the editor-in-chief (or even to his own). Within the context of a modular organization, this greatly simplifies various procedures - such as replacing members - because relatively little time needs to be dedicated to introducing them to the ‘organization’ and its culture, norms and practices. Like Uber drivers, they are organizational members primarily through transactional contracts (see Rosenblat and Stark 2016). As noted by Langlois (2000, 19), through modularity, organizations can ‘eliminate what would otherwise be an unmanageable spaghetti tangle of systemic interconnections’.

While there is a broad but non-traditional sense of hierarchy and some places are loosely associated with this form of organizing, there is undeniably a strong sense of

performativity connected to this mafia organization. Modularity is achieved and performed through the complex ways in which the organization presented by Kurkov (2003) connects to virtually all aspects of modern life in Ukraine. Put differently, the modular organization presented by Kurkov (2003) is akin to an octopus (Magyar 2016, 63), having a tentacle reaching into almost all aspects of daily life, yet with the particularity of being hidden in plain sight.

Kurkov's novel unfolds in the mid-1990s in post-Soviet Ukraine and so modularity is not yet enabled by information technologies (contrary to the notion of digital technologies as instrumental to the advent of modularity in organizations). Furthermore, the elusiveness and lack of materiality of the mafia organization depicted by Kurkov (2003) is reinforced by the emphasis on vocal over written communications. While certain key documents would be produced in a written form (e.g. the stack of obelisks kept in the editor-in-chief's safe), most communications were oral, enhancing the difficulty of tracing events and associations. The different modules appear to be highly fragmented, as the absence of written documents implies that only the people closely connected to a particular case or event will possess the required information (i.e. knowledge is contained within modules).

The organization presented by Kurkov (2003) can be assimilated to the image of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) inasmuch as it does not have specific directions and can grow in virtually any direction (depending on both endogenous and exogenous forces). No fundamental parts (or modules) define such organizing. The strength of a modular organization rests on the absence of a 'vital organ' without which the organization could not run and would collapse. It has no heart or head to remove so is

highly flexible and reactive to change (Nadler and Tushman 1999; Schilling and Steensma 2001) as most modules can be replaced without any serious impact. In that sense, a modular organization is more reactive to turbulent business environments and can initiate change more rapidly in such contexts. As noted by Kurkov (2003), in a modular organization everything can be solved easily ('the boys will handle it', 'don't worry, the guys are on it', etc.). Enhanced flexibility is also reflected in the ways in which employees work in the 'organization'. In a sense, Viktor's work gives him a great deal of flexibility and (barring the odd 'crunch' deadline – Peticca-Harris et al. 2015) he is in control of his own work routine. Organizational design and governance is transformed due to decentralised and distributed characteristics. Each obelisk is one in a series of distributed ledgers that record and maintain indefinitely an ever-growing list of data records of death, records that cannot be altered or tampered with: they just are – much as is the case with a modern blockchain. Through the obelisks the process of developing, executing and evaluating decisions becomes automated and the obelisk makes the record of decision irreversible. The obelisk establishes a form of finitude.

The mafia organization portrayed by Kurkov (2003) highlights both the elusiveness of its being and the strong sense of performativity underlying the ways in which it operates. Modular organizations perform temporal simultaneity through their rhizome-like rationalities of organizing. While individuals in modular organization are simple cogs in a wider machine, the difference with Weber and Kafka lies in the realization that 'employees' do not play a key role in a modular organization (as any module can be removed at any time). Indeed, as already noted, they are employees only in the sense that an Uber driver may be termed an employee – one without any of the normal attributes attendant on being an organizational member. In a modular organization,

employees are part of a wider network that keeps being re-shaped and re-performed, in the same way as a rhizome continuously grows in unpredictable directions.

*Alienation and isolation in a modular organization*

The following conversation, which occurs midway in the novel between Viktor and the editor-in-chief of *Capital News*, summarises the position of Viktor with respect to his employment:

“Have a holiday,” he said, preparing to leave. “When the dust settles, I’ll return, and we’ll continue the good work.”

“But, Igor, what is the real point of my work?” Viktor asked, stopping him in his tracks.

The Chief considered him through narrowed eyes.

“Your interest lies in not asking questions,” he said quietly. “Think what you like. But bear in mind this: the moment you are told what the point of your work is, you’re dead. This isn’t a film, it’s for real. The full story is what you get told only if and when your work, and with it your existence, are no longer required”.’

(Kurkov 2003, 121)

Throughout *Death and the Penguin*, Viktor is depicted as a relatively one-dimensional character (like most in Kurkov’s novel). His role is as a driver of a narrative in which much of the emphasis revolves around the intricacies connected to his obelisk-writing activities (and therefore the peculiarities of his employment). On the one hand, Viktor can be seen to benefit from a great degree of freedom in regard to time management,

relations with hierarchy (a flatter hierarchy implying easy access to more senior ‘colleagues’) and work patterns, while receiving a comfortable income. The structural flexibility of the modular organization enables these conditions (Baldwin and Clark 1997, 2000; Campagnolo and Camuffo 2010). The extreme flexibility of modular organizations is reinforced by the fact that the employee's’ personal expertise is not central to the organization (Hirst and Humphreys 2015). Viktor did not possess any particular skill related to the job he has been spontaneously offered (writing obituaries) other than being a not very successful short story writer and yet he rapidly becomes very talented at the task. In practical terms, this means that employees, as well as modules, can be replaced rapidly and at a very low cost (echoing what has been said earlier with respect to the limited time spent introducing the organization and its culture). On the other hand, a feeling of isolation parallels and echoes this enhanced flexibility. Viktor knows that he forms part of a complex network of associations involving a multiplicity of places, actors and processes but in narrative terms the network remains mostly invisible, leaving Viktor in an isolated position.

The performativity and ever-changing nature of the modular organization with which Viktor becomes associated is demonstrated on various occasions throughout the novel as shaping the ways in which Viktor experiences and engages with his new work. At the beginning of the novel his status changes from being an unemployed and unsuccessful author to becoming a skilled and in-demand obelisk writer. Towards the end of the novel, when Viktor discovers the reason why a stranger follows Nina and Sonya and inquires about him, his death has become irremediable, thus fulfilling the prophecy announced by the editor-in-chief: once Viktor knows about the implications of his work (i.e. once he assembles a more complete picture of the modular organization

for which he works), his services will no longer be required. In a sense, the various connections and relations established through Viktor's obelisk-writing activities abruptly come to an end, perhaps just as quickly as they started. They contribute to producing a constant feeling of stress and uncertainty, as any module can be deleted or replaced at any point in time (in case of malfunctioning).

In many different ways, Viktor appears as an image of alienation. There is a very dense academic literature on the concept of alienation spanning different fields of inquiry (see Yuill (2000) for a review on the evolution of the concept of alienation). Regardless of their intellectual affiliations and differences (Israel 1971; Meszaros 1975; Seeman 1959) these approaches have sought to highlight the pervasiveness and multidimensionality of alienation. What is common to the different treatments, however, is that alienation not only refers to 'powerlessness and a lack of freedom but also to a characteristic impoverishment of the relation to self and world' (Jaeggi 2014, 6). Viktor is not alienated in the sense of being prisoner of his work (though his work is repetitive and not particularly fulfilling, especially as he progressively loses the possibility to choose the subjects of his obituaries) but rather his alienation arises because he does not possess sufficient information to construct a complete image of the organization with which he has become associated or the purpose of the work that he does, clearly limiting his decision-making possibilities and autonomy (DiPietro and Pizam 2007). He is a flexible worker but increasingly not autonomous: he can do what he does when he chooses but he cannot choose what he wants to do. In other words, if Viktor's work is flexible, it cannot be defined as autonomous inasmuch as he is constantly presented as waiting for information and directions regarding his job. Furthermore, Viktor does not see the 'whole product' (or end product) connected to his

own personal activities (that is the death of the subject of his obituary) and does not possess any ownership over his work (as his obituaries are written under the pseudonym ‘a group of friends’). The ways in which elements and actions appear to work independently contributes to the further detachment of employees from their work in a modular organization.

The experience of alienation connected to a modularity of organizing differs greatly from the images of alienation that emerge from accounts on bureaucracies. While Baldry et al. (1998) comment on how the dark satanic mills, the manufactories of Marx’s day, were replaced by ‘bright satanic offices’ with the growth of bureaucracy, our paper highlights how modularity allows for the expansion of entrapment to a completely different level from the cogs of the machine or the ‘iron cage’. The modular organisation becomes embedded within the core of our social, political and economic realities; one simply cannot be a classically ‘instrumental worker’ whose ‘escape attempts’ render the cage bearable.<sup>4</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While centralisation and formalisation (embedded in bureaucratic forms of organizing) have been presented as promoting workplace alienation (see Blauner 1964; Mottaz 1981), we can appreciate how a different form of alienation emerges from a modular organization revolving around flexibility and decentralisation. Kurkov (2003) conjures up the image of the alienated worker in a modular organization that enacts a different form of precariousness, one in which the lack of tangibility and enhanced independence

---

<sup>4</sup> The text in inverted commas refers, respectively, to two remarkable examples of industrial sociological analyses of bureaucratic organizations: Goldthorpe et al. (1969) and Cohen and Taylor (1992).

between the different modules (Campagnolo and Camuffo 2010) leads to flexible ease in removing a module at any time. Compared to a bureaucratic organization, no module is a vital organ and if some modules disappear, new ones will emerge, rhizomatically, along with new forms of connectivity and new relations. Ultimately, continuously new forms of precariousness and dependency align with being fully flexible. The fact that Viktor must depend on the limited amount of information he is given (occasionally learning that he has to hide from hit men who are seeking to eliminate him) reinforces the feeling of isolation produced by this modular mafia organization. Finally, Viktor seems oblivious to all that is happening around him; blindly he follows whatever direction he is given by his direct boss - seduced by the easy money he obtains and reluctant to question the ways in which the system operates for fear of losing the advantage of being employed in it. Viktor's 'rise' to a higher status (along with the mafia interest in his writing competencies) is as swift as his fall when he learns that an obelisk is being written about him. Viktor experiences a blurring of the boundary between private life and work commitments, as he needs always to be available (always contactable or contractible) when needed. He spends a great deal of time expecting to be contacted by his boss, displaying a high level of dependency, being obliged to accept any work offered. There is a constant tension between flexibility/autonomy, connectivity/isolation and unpredictability/planning with respect to Viktor's obelisk-writing activities. Flexibility and decentralisation are seen to produce isolation (difficulty of knowing the boundaries of the organization as well as other persons involved), high information dependency as well as a false feeling of comfort and security.



In a final coda, we see that Misha is Viktor's alter ego, a creature out of context, in an alienating world that it struggles to understand, surviving, sickly and isolated, void of human form. In that sense, we can, perhaps, appreciate more deeply the wider resonance of the final sentence in the novel: "The penguin," said Viktor bleakly, "is me" (Kurkov 2003, 228).

## References

Adler, P. S. 2012. "Perspective – the sociological ambivalence of bureaucracy: from Weber via Gouldner to Marx." *Organization Science* 23 (1): 244-266. Doi: 10.1287/orsc.1100.0615.

Alvesson, M., and H. Willmott. 2002. "Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual." *Journal of management studies* 39 (5): 619-644. Doi: 10.1111/1467-6486.00305.

Antonelli, C., and G. Nuzzi. 2012. *Blood Ties: The Calabrian Mafia*. Pan Macmillan.

Arlacchi, P. 1988. *Mafia Business*. Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks.

Baldry, Chris, Peter Bain, and Phil Taylor. 1998. "Bright satanic offices: intensification, control and team taylorism." In *Workplaces of the future*, edited by Paul Thompson and Chris Warhurst, 163-183. Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave.

Baldwin, C. Y. and K. B. Clark. 1997. "Managing in the age of modularity." *Harvard Business Review*, September–October.

Baldwin, C. Y. and K. B. Clark. 2000. *Design rules. Volume 1: The Power of Modularity*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Beyes, T. 2009. "An aesthetics of displacement: Thomas Pynchon's symptomatology of organization." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 22 (4): 421-436. Doi: 10.1108/09534810910967189.

- Blauner, R. 1964. *Alienation and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Block, A. A. 1980. *East Side, West Side: Organizing Crime in New York, 1930-1950*. Transaction publishers.
- Borenstein, E. 2008. *Overkill*. Cornell University Press.
- Campagnolo, D., and A. Camuffo. 2010. "The concept of modularity in management studies: a literature review." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 12 (3): 259-283. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00260.x.
- Cederström, C., and P. Fleming. 2016. "On Bandit Organizations and Their (IL) Legitimacy: Concept Development and Illustration." *Organization Studies* 37 (11): 1575-1594. Doi: 10.1177/0170840616655484.
- Clarke, M. 2008. "Understanding and managing employability in changing career contexts." *Journal of European Industrial Training* 32 (4): 258-284. Doi: 10.1108/03090590810871379.
- Clegg, S. R., Cunha, M. P., Munro, I., Rego, A., and de Sousa, O. M. (2016) Kafkaesque power and bureaucracy, *Journal of Political Power*, 9:2, 157-181.
- Cohen, S., and L. Taylor. 1992. *Escape attempts*. London: Routledge.
- Courpasson, D., and M. Reed. 2004. "Introduction: Bureaucracy in the age of enterprise." *Organization* 11 (1): 5-12. Doi: 10.1177/1350508404039656.
- Czarniawska-Joerges, B., and P. De Monthoux. eds. 2005. *Good novels, better management: Reading organizational realities in fiction*. Routledge.
- Czarniawska, B. 2009. "Distant readings: anthropology of organizations through novels." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 22 (4): 357-372. Doi: 10.1108/09534810910967143.

D'Adderio, L., and N. Pollock. 2014. "Performing modularity: Competing rules, performative struggles and the effect of organizational theories on the organization." *Organization Studies* 35 (12): 1813-1843. Doi: 10.1177/0170840614538962.

Davidow, P., and M. Malone. 1992. *The virtual corporation*. New York: Harper Collins.

De Cock, C. 2000. "Reflections on fiction, representation, and organization studies: an essay with special reference to the work of Jorge Luis Borges." *Organization Studies* 21 (3): 589-609. Doi: 10.1177/0170840600213005.

De Cock, C., and C. Land. 2006. "Organization/literature: Exploring the seam." *Organization Studies* 27 (4): 517-535. Doi: 10.1177/0170840605058234.

Deleuze, G., and F. Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deroy, X., and S. R. Clegg. 2015. "Back in the USSR: Introducing Recursive Contingency to Institutional Theory." *Organization Studies* 36(1): 73-90. Doi: 10.1177/0170840614544556.

DeVault, M. L. 1990. "Novel readings: The social organization of interpretation." *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (4): 887-921. Doi: 10.1086/229380.

DeVault, M. L. 1999. *Liberating Method: Feminism and social research*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Dickie, J. 2004. *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia*. Palgrave.

DiPietro, R. B., and A. Pizam 2007. "Employee alienation in the quick service restaurant industry." *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* 32 (1): 22-39. Doi: 10.1177/1096348007309567.

Djelic, M. L., and A. Ainamo 1999. "The coevolution of new organizational forms in the fashion industry: a historical and comparative study of France, Italy, and the United States." *Organization Science* 10: 622-637. Doi: 10.1287/orsc.10.5.622.

- Fixson, S. K. 2005. "Product architecture assessment: a tool to link product, process, and supply chain design decisions." *Journal of Operations Management* 23: 345-369. Doi: 10.1016/j.jom.2004.08.006.
- Gambetta, D. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection*. Harvard University Press.
- Gellner, E. 1994. *Conditions of liberty*. London: Penguin.
- Goldthorpe, J. H., D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer, and J. Platt. 1969. *The affluent worker in the class structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gond, J.-P., G. Palazzo, and K. Basu. 2009. "Reconsidering instrumental corporate social responsibility through the mafia metaphor." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 19(1): 57–85. Doi: 10.5840/beq20091913.
- Grabher, G., and D. Stark, eds. 1997. *Restructuring networks in post-socialism*. Clarendon Press.
- Granter, E. 2017. "Strictly business: Critical Theory and the society of rackets." *Competition & Change* 21 (2): 94-113. Doi: 1024529417690716.
- Grey, C., and C. Garsten. 2001. "Trust, control and post-bureaucracy." *Organization studies* 22 (2): 229-250. Doi: 10.1177/01708406012222003.
- Guerrero-Gutiérrez, E. 2011. "Security, drugs, and violence in Mexico: A survey." Presented at the *7th North American Forum, Washington DC*.
- Heckscher, Charles. 1994. "Defining the post-bureaucratic type." In *The post-bureaucratic organization*, edited by Charles Heckscher and Anne Donnellon, 14-62. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Helfat, C. E., and K. M. Eisenhardt. 2004. "Inter-temporal economies of scope, organizational modularity, and the dynamics of diversification." *Strategic Management Journal* 25: 1217-1232. Doi: 10.1002/smj.427.

Hirst, A., and M. Humphreys. 2015. "Configuring bureaucracy and the making of the modular man." *Organization studies* 36 (11): 1531-1553. Doi: 10.1177/0170840615593585.

Hodgson, D. E. 2004. "Project work: the legacy of bureaucratic control in the post-bureaucratic organization." *Organization* 11 (1): 81-100. Doi: 10.1177/1350508404039659.

Hodson, R., V. J. Roscigno, A. Martin, and S. H. Lopez. 2013. "The ascension of Kafkaesque bureaucracy in private sector organizations." *Human Relations* 66 (9): 1249-1273. Doi: 10.1177/0018726712470290.

Hoetker, G. 2006. "Do modular products lead to modular organizations?" *Strategic Management Journal* 27: 501–518. Doi: 10.1002/smj.528.

Hortis, C. A. 2014. *The Mob and the City: The Hidden History of how the Mafia Captured New York*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Israel, J. 1971. *Alienation: from Marx to modern sociology: a macrosociological analysis*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Jaeggi, R. 2014. *Alienation*. Columbia University Press.

Jenkins, P. 1992. "The speed capital of the world: Organizing the methamphetamine industry in Philadelphia 1970–1990." *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 6 (1): 17-39. Doi: 10.1177/088740349200600102.

Kafka, F. 2015. *The trial*. USA: Tribeca Books.

Kallinikos, J. 2003. "Work, human agency and organizational forms: An anatomy of fragmentation." *Organization Studies*, 24 (4): 595-618. Doi: 10.1177/0170840603024004005.

Kallinikos, J. 2004. "The social foundations of the bureaucratic order." *Organization* 11 (1): 13-36. Doi: 10.1177/1350508404039657.

Keenoy, T., and G. Seijo. 2009. "Re-imagining e-mail: Academics in *The Castle*." *Organization* 17 (2): 177–199. Doi: 10.1177/1350508409342610.

Kelly, R. J. 1999. *The upperworld and the underworld: Case studies of racketeering and business infiltrations in the United States*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Knights, D., and H. Willmott. 1999. *Management Lives*. London: Sage.

Kornberger, M., S. R. Clegg, and C. Carter. 2006. "Rethinking the polyphonic organization: Managing as discursive practice." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 22 (1): 3-30. Doi: 10.1016/j.scaman.2005.05.004.

Kurkov, A. 2003. *Death and the Penguin*. London: Vintage Books.

Land, C., and M. Sliwa. 2009. "The novel and organization: Introduction from the editors." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 22 (4): 349-356. Doi: 10.1108/09534810910967134.

Langlois, R. N. 2002. "Modularity in technology and organization." *Journal of economic behavior & organization* 49 (1): 19-37. Doi:10.1016/S0167-2681(02)00056-2.

Leavis, F. R. 1948. *The Great Tradition*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Lorenzo Tondo. 2015. "Meet the Sicilian Mafia Hitman Who Killed 80 People and Will Be Free in 5 Years" *Time magazine*, October 21. <http://time.com/4062017/sicilian-mafia-hitman/>

Magyar, B. 2016. *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*. Central European University Press.

Marsden, D. 2004. "The 'Network Economy' and models of the employment contract." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 42 (4): 659-684. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2004.00335.x.

McCabe, D. 2014. "Light in the darkness? Managers in the back office of a Kafkaesque bank." *Organization Studies* 35 (2): 255-278. Doi: 10.1177/0170840613511928.

Mészáros, I. 1975. *Marx's theory of alienation*. Merlin Press.

Morton, M. S. 1991. *The corporation of the 1990s: Information technology and organizational transformation*. Oxford University Press.

Mottaz, C. J. 1981. "Some determinants of work alienation." *Sociological Quarterly* 22 (4): 515–529. Doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.1981.tb00678.x.

Munro, I., and C. Huber. 2012. "Kafka's mythology: Organization, bureaucracy and the limits of sensemaking." *Human Relations* 65 (4): 523-543. Doi: 10.1177/0018726711430558.

Nadler, D. A., and M. L. Tushman 1999. "The organization of the future: strategic imperatives and core competencies for the 21st century." *Organizational Dynamics* 28: 45-60

O'Connor, E. S. 1995. "Paradoxes of participation: Textual analysis and organizational change." *Organization Studies* 16 (5): 769-803. Doi: 10.1177/017084069501600502.

Pandremenos, J., J. Paralikas, K. Salonitis, and G. Chryssolouris. 2009. "Modularity concepts for the automotive industry: a critical review." *CIRP Journal of Manufacturing Science and Technology* 1 (3): 148–152. Doi: 10.1016/j.cirpj.2008.09.012.

Parker, M. 2005. "Organizational Gothic." *Culture and Organization* 11: 153–166. Doi: 10.1080/14759550500203003.

Parker, M. 2012. *Alternative business*. London: Routledge.

Patient, D., T. B. Lawrence, and S. Maitlis. 2003. "Understanding workplace envy through narrative fiction." *Organization Studies* 24 (7): 1015-1044. Doi: 10.1177/01708406030247002.

Peticca-Harris, A., J. Weststar, and S. McKenna. 2015. "The perils of project-based work: Attempting resistance to extreme work practices in video game development." *Organization* 22 (4): 570-587.

Philby, K. 1969. *My Silent War: The Autobiography of a Spy*. London: Panther.

Phillips, N. 1995. "Telling organizational tales: On the role of narrative fiction in the study of organizations." *Organization studies* 16 (4): 625-649. Doi: 10.1177/017084069501600408.

Prasad, A. 2014. "Psychoanalytically Reading Hedonic Consumption in the 50 Shades Trilogy." *Advances in Consumer Research* 42: 646.

Pulignano, V., and P. Stewart. 2008. "Bureaucracy transcended? New patterns of employment regulation and labour control in the international automotive industry." *New Technology, Work and Employment* 21 (2): 90-106. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-005X.2006.00166.x.

Quinones, S. 2016. *Dreamland*. Bloomsbury Press.

Reuter, P. 1985. *The Organization of Illegal Markets: An Economic Analysis*. New York: United States National Institute of Justice.

Reuter, P., and J. B. Rubinstein. 1978. "Fact, fancy, and organized crime." *The Public Interest* 53: 45-67.

Rhodes, C. 2000. "Reading and writing organizational lives." *Organization* 7 (1): 7-29.

Rhodes, C. 2009. "'All I want to do is get that check and get drunk' Testifying to resistance in Charles Bukowski's Factotum." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 22 (4): 386-401. Doi: 10.1108/09534810910967161.

Rhodes, C., and A. D. Brown. 2005. "Writing responsibly: Narrative fiction and organization studies." *Organization* 12 (4): 467-491. Doi: 10.1177/1350508405052757.



Rhodes, C., and R. Westwood. 2016. "The Limits of Generosity: Lessons on Ethics, Economy, and Reciprocity in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*." *Journal of Business Ethics* 133 (2): 235-248. Doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2350-1.

Ricoeur, P. 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rosenblat, A. and L. Stark. 2016. "Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries: A Case Study of Uber's Drivers." *International Journal of Communication* 10 (27): 3758-3784. Doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2686227.

Saviano, R. 2008. *Gomorra: Italy's other Mafia*. London: Pan Macmillan.

Schilling, M. A., and H. K. Steensma. 2001. "The use of modular organizational forms: An industry-level analysis." *Academy of Management Journal* 44 (6): 1149-1168. Doi: 10.2307/3069394.

Seeman, M. 1959. "On the meaning of alienation." *American sociological review* 24 (6): 783-791.

Shamsuzzoha, A., P. T. Helo, and T. Kekäle. 2010. "Application of modularity in world automotive industries: a literature analysis." *International Journal of Automotive Technology and Management* 10 (4): 361-377. Doi: 10.1504/IJATM.2010.035646.

Simon, H. A. 1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Simon, H. A. 2002. "Near decomposability and the speed of evolution." *Industrial and Corporate Change* 11: 587-599. Doi: 10.1093/icc/11.3.587.

Śliwa, M., and G. Cairns 2007. "The Novel as a Vehicle for Organizational Inquiry: Engaging with the Complexity of Social and Organizational Commitment." *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 7 (2): 309-325.

Śliwa, M., S. Spoelstra, B. M. Sørensen, and C. Land. 2012. "Profaning the sacred in leadership studies: A reading of Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase*." *Organization* 20 (6): 860-880. Doi: 10.1177/1350508412455837.

Smith, D. C. 1980. "Paragons, pariahs and pirates: a spectrum based theory of enterprise." *Crime and Delinquency* 26 (3): 358-386. Doi: 10.1177/001112878002600306.

Stille, A. 1995. *Excellent Cadavers: The Mafia and the Death of the First Italian Republic*. Pantheon.

Stohl, C., and M. Stohl. 2011. "Secret agencies: The communicative constitution of a clandestine organization." *Organization Studies* 32 (9): 1197-1215. Doi: 0.1177/0170840611410839.

Takeishi, A. 2002. "Knowledge partitioning in the interfirm division of labor: the case of automotive product development." *Organization Science* 13: 321–338. Doi: 10.1287/orsc.13.3.321.2779.

Ulrich, K. 1995. "The role of product architecture in the manufacturing firm." *Research Policy* 24: 419–440. Doi: 10.1016/0048-7333(94)00775-3.

Varese, F. 2010. "Organized crime." In *Organized Crime: Critical Concepts in Criminology*, edited by Federico Varese, 1-33. Routledge.

Varese, F. 2011. *Mafias on the move: How organized crime conquers new territories*. Princeton University Press.

Varese, F. 2017. *Mafia Life*. Profile books.

Warner, M. 2007. "Kafka, Weber and organization theory." *Human Relations* 60 (7): 1019-1038. Doi: 10.1177/0018726707081156.

Watson, T. 2000. "Ethnographic fiction science: Making sense of managerial work and organizational research processes with Caroline and Terry." *Organization* 7 (3): 489–510.

Williams, P. and E. U. Savona. eds. 1996. *The United Nations and transnational organized crime*. Taylor & Francis.

Worren, N., K. Moore, and P. Cardona. 2002. "Modularity, strategic flexibility, and firm performance: a study of the home appliance industry." *Strategic Management Journal* 23: 1123–1140. Doi: 10.1002/smj.276.

Yuill, C. 2011. "Forgetting and remembering alienation theory." *History of the Human Sciences* 24 (2): 103-119. Doi: 10.1177/0952695111400525.