LIQUID SPIRITS:

The (re)production of academic identities through practices

A thesis submitted by

Marco Berti

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Acknowledgments

There is some rhetoric around the challenges of doing a PhD. This is undoubtedly an enterprise that requires a great deal of commitment and hard work. However I did not find the production of this dissertation a 'herculean effort' or a 'descent into the underworld'. Even though I had to devote many weekends and evenings to my research, I found my doctoral studies an enjoyable, gratifying and stimulating journey. In part this was due to the fact that, as a mature student, I have been able to build on the experiences and the readings of half a lifetime. Still, what really made my PhD experience so pleasurable were the fabulous people who mentored and supported me; the ideal setting in which I was able to study and do research as well as the blissful presence of friends and family.

Even if this work bears only my signature, I believe that it is the result of a team effort, because it has been profoundly influenced by many stimulating conversations and productive exchanges of ideas. Here, I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to the many people who in one way or another made these three years such a fruitful and fulfilling experience, and name at least some of them, at the same time apologizing to those who I am failing to mention because of my imperfect memory.

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Acronyms used in the text

AACSB:	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AMBA:	Association of MBAs
ANT:	Actor Network Theory
AQF:	Australian Qualifications Framework
CFO:	Chief Financial Officer
DCCW	Dr Chau Chak Wing (Building)
EMBA:	Executive MBA
EQUIS:	European Quality Improvement System
ERA:	Excellence in Research for Australia
ERP:	Enterprise Resource Planning
ICT:	Information and Communications Technology
MBA:	Master in Business Administration
MDG:	Management Discipline Group
NPM	New Public Management
NSWIT:	New South Wales Institute of Technology
TEQSA:	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UTS:	University of Technology Sydney
UTSB:	UTS Business School
VET:	Vocational Education and Training

Abstract

Business schools have important social, economic and moral responsibilities, since their teaching and research influence managerial and entrepreneurial practices. A rich debate surrounds the characteristics and limitations of the current model of business education as well as what should be done now and in the future to create better managers and entrepreneurs. The intent of this research is to offer an original contribution to this discussion by investigating the factors that shape the behaviour of management academics.

Business Schools seek to capture not only the best knowledge, research and teaching in their ranks but also to direct it towards goal-oriented corporate purposes, whether in the pursuit of accreditation, rankings, or some other measure of 'excellence'. In doing so, they necessarily seek to shape and frame the activities, choices and performances of management academics. Some pertinent questions that arise in regards to their doing so are the following: are the behaviours of management and business school academics primarily shaped by their individual agency, by the managerial efforts of the organizations in which they are embedded or by other forces? What can be done to enhance collaboration or direct individual efforts towards specific goals? By addressing these questions, my thesis problematizes some assumptions that are implicit in the current debate, to which I propose alternatives.

The research adopts two theoretical lenses to pursue this objective, practice theory and social identity theory. These theories are used to interpret data on narrative accounts of professional identities and on the working practices of a group of management academics that operate in the context of a transforming business school. The sources of data include 72 questionnaires, 16 semi-structured interviews, as well as two years of ethnographic field observations. This 'micro' analysis is situated in the context of a large spectrum critical

analysis of the discursive landscape in which academic work is performed. This includes both a 'mapping' of the global Discourses of business education and of academic work (performed through a genealogic discourse analysis of the literature) and an examination of the local discourses characterizing the specific workplace of my informants.

By combining these multiple sources of information, this work depicts a representation of the life-world of management academics, one that includes social, technological, political, organizational and emotional forces. My findings demonstrate that the relationship between academic identities and practices is situated in a liminal space characterized by exposure to a variety of material, discursive and relational tensions. I suggest this induces liquefaction of academic identities, which I describe as 'liquid spirits'. As such, they are resistant to direct managerial supervision but remain 'bottled up' in facilitative circuits of power. In conclusion I suggest that, in order to 'organize' management academics' efforts productively, it is necessary to take this complexity into account and I offer some concrete example of possible (albeit not uncontroversial) alternatives to facilitate academic work.