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## The Consulting Arcade: Walking Through Fetish-Land

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### Abstract (Article Summary)

This paper presents a montage<sup>1</sup> of images of consulting as a force of modernity. The dialectical juxtapositioning exercised here aims to engage with modern consultancy work by investigating its fetish structure and dream-like existence that nevertheless produces very 'real' subjectivities. What follows then is the attempt of 'I,' a modern subject, to make sense of an experience, a shock. Benjamin once wrote to his friend Scholem: "It's like me being right in the arcades myself." Same here: 'I' am in the space of the consultant's non-places; the prostitute who sells her body as commodity; the *flâneur* who has a special empathy with the commodity; the collector desperately trying to create a whole out of the empty use-value of the dead commodity; the gambler who thrives on the shock of the commodity rush; the knowledge worker exhilarated by the telecommunicative trauma produced by the techno-knowledge commodity machine. As a montage, however, it is as much a destructive juxtapositioning of images of modernity as an autobiographical reflection on damaged life.

### Full Text (7,512 words)

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## THE CONSULTANT

Once upon a time there was a shepherd tending his sheep at the edge of a country road. A brand new Mustang screeches to a halt next to him. The driver, a young man dressed in an Armani suit, Cerrutti shoes, Oakley glasses, TAG wrist watch and a Bhs tie gets out and asks the shepherd, 'If I guess how many sheep you have, will you give me one of them?' The shepherd looks at the young man, then looks at the sprawling field of sheep and says, 'Okay.' The young man parks the car, connects his notebook and wireless modem, enters a NASA site, scans the ground using his GPS, opens a database and 60 Excel tables filled with algorithms, then prints a 150 page report on his high tech mini printer. He then turns to the shepherd and says, 'You have exactly 1,586 sheep here.' The shepherd answers: 'That's correct, you can have your sheep.' The young man takes one of the animals and puts it in the back of his vehicle. The shepherd looks at him and asks: 'Now, if I guess your profession, will you pay me back in kind?' The young man answers: 'Sure.' The shepherd says, 'You are a consultant.' 'Exactly! How did you know?' asks the young man. 'Very simple,' answers the shepherd. 'First, you came here without being called. Second, you charged me a fee to tell me something I already knew. Third, you do not understand anything about my business ... and I'd really like to have my dog back.'<sup>2</sup>

The *Collins English Dictionary* reveals that to consult is to make oneself available to give professional advice, especially at scheduled times and for a fee. The term 'consult' originates in the medical profession. There, a consultant is a physician who is asked to confirm a diagnosis; or it is a physician (or surgeon) who holds the highest appointment in a particular branch of medicine or surgery in a hospital. The consultant is, therefore, someone – mostly a specialist – who is *asked* to give expert advice or information.

The management consultant is a special breed of consultant<sup>3</sup>. She is frequently seen to be the personification of the knowledge economy; he is the knowledge worker *per se*; she is the anti-thesis to Ford's assembly-line worker. The consultant symbolises the 'future' of work: not dirty, not heavy-duty, not manual, not monotonous, not de-skilled, not de-humanized, not badly paid; but flexible, creative, international, demanding, cross-cultural, well-paid, technologically advanced, fun. Everybody wants to be a consultant – at least if one believes the typical business school undergraduate student<sup>4</sup>. The consultant is the idol of today's working world; it is one of the main 'drivers' of the business of business education; it serves as the target, the object of desire, the fetish. Accenture, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Andersen, Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, McKinsey & Co., Bain & Co., The Boston Consulting Group, and Mercer (to name but a few) are the archetypal companies of today's global 'informational' capital, which attract the 'highest calibre' graduates.

Consultants...are the archetype of that industrial icon, the knowledge worker, while their agencies are a kind of virtual organization, perpetually being assembled and reassembled around projects.<sup>5</sup>

Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> – my first day on the IKM<sup>6</sup> project: I drove to the office, which is located near Frankfurt. I had been there before, but I was astounded again how relatively small it is; after all, this is the head-office for over 200 consultants in the German region. I entered the building to tell the receptionist that I had arrived. She rang a number and soon after I was picked up from the lounge by a woman who turned out to be the secretary of the IKM project. She introduced me to the senior manager, Pascal, a principal who has been with the company since 1993. He was French and must have been in his late 30s. We had spoken on the phone before - in English, as my French is virtually non-existent and I did not know about his German language abilities. However, he started to talk in excellent German, which took me by surprise. He showed me around a little; I realised that the whole building was almost empty. I was told that during the week, meaning Mondays to Thursdays, all consultants are usually at client project sites; only Fridays they come in to have their 'office day.' Then I was introduced to my office. When I entered the room, I did not notice any sign on the door saying 'IKM PROJECT' or something similar; there was only a normal computer printout on the door stating 'STEFFEN BÖHM 02.06.-31.07.98'. Then we went to the computer support room to pick up my 'brain,' as some consultants call their laptop computers. I was shown how to log into the house network, which is needed for printing, surfing on the Internet and 'Compass' (InterCon's<sup>7</sup> intranet), sending e-mails, and using Lotus Notes. Later, I was introduced to the other senior manager of the project, Jack - on the phone. He was Dutch

and only came into the German office for one day every fortnight. He gave me his mobile number. 'I'm always on the road,' he said. And then he told me about his week: 'Yesterday, I was in the Utrecht office; today, Tuesday, I am at a meeting in London; on Wednesday and Thursday, I am probably going to be in Paris; Friday, I am not sure about, I might work from home', he said; 'And at the weekend?' I asked. After this call, Pascal produced a sheet of paper that certainly had past its best. It was covered with many names and numbers which I was hardly able to read. 'This is the IKM project team,' he said. On this scruffy piece of paper I read 'Virginia in Cambridge, MA, Monica and Stefanie in London, Vanessa in Paris, Walter in Frankfurt,' and about a dozen more names that all had their voice-mail numbers attached to them.

A world where people are born in the clinic and die in the hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions; where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing, where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines, and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce. A world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary, and ephemeral, [we are in a world of] ... non-places<sup>8</sup>, ... the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified – with the aid of a few conversions between area, volume, and distance – by totally all the air, rail, and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' (aircraft, trains and road vehicle), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets. And finally, the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication, so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself.<sup>9</sup>

The consultant exists in the space of non-places, distance, speed and ephemerality. He is detached from the ground, zooming at high speed through the telecommunicative channels of the global info-network, occasionally stopping at non-places such as airports, global companies' world headquarters, motorway fast-food robots, and five-star international hotel chains. She does not get her hands dirty, he is not digging in the muddy ground; his knowledge comes pre-constructed on the computer hard-disk and glossy PowerPoint presentations. She lives a life of distance from long-term problems; his existence is about celebrating the eternal return of the ephemeral commodity; her life is one of shock, destruction – enjoying the spectacle. The consultant needs to destruct – only knowledge that destructs tradition and promises a dream future at the same time can be sold on the competitive market.

The shock experience which the passer-by has in the crowd corresponds to what the worker 'experiences' at his machine.<sup>10</sup>

[E]xperience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness. Every glance at a newspaper demonstrates that it has reached a new low; that our picture, not only of the external world, but of the moral world as well, overnight has undergone changes which were never thought possible. With the World War a process began to become apparent which has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable

at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth. And there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.<sup>11</sup>

The consultant lives in the age of the ‘information bomb’: an age where every place (city, airport, service station) becomes increasingly the same non-place; an age where Newtonian time-space gives way to the hyper-modern electro-magnetic fields of perception, optics, images – the speed of light. It is this ‘hyper-modern’ organizational space in which the consultant, the knowledge worker, surfs the intranet and Internet, uses mobile phones, and sends emails around the world in seconds. These shocks leave a trace on the ‘ground’ of the modern subject who becomes alienated from its immediate surrounding space; it looks at the world, displaced through the window of the car, train, or plane moving at high speed; it experiences the world through the informational powers of photographic, cinematic, or internet images – non-places.

## **THE COMMODITY**

A commodity appears at first sight as an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it satisfies human needs, or that it first takes on these properties as the product of human labour. It is absolutely clear that, by his activity, man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless, the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.<sup>12</sup>

The ephemerality of the ‘virtual’ space of consulting is reflected by the ephemerality of the knowledge commodity itself. At the beginning, I had problems accepting that today’s knowledge is already yesterday’s knowledge. One has to get into a special ‘ephemeral mood,’ a mood of destruction and shock. The only thing that counts is tomorrow’s sale. If you are not in business with the client tomorrow, then you are out of the job; and there is no office waiting for you to go back to – it is as crude as that. Thus, the knowledge commodity has to be kept in movement; let it dance!

To grasp the significance of *nouveauté*, it is necessary to go back to novelty in everyday life. Why does everyone share the newest thing with someone else? Presumably, in order to triumph over the dead. This only where there is nothing really new.<sup>13</sup>

The consultancy industry is vulnerable to the constant need to find new business, while consultants themselves experience the pressures of having to come up with the new ideas and fads with which to feed the corporate machine. The fact that consultants enter organizations ostensibly to solve problems doesn't mean they are immune from the insecurities and apprehensions that afflict managers in client organizations.<sup>14</sup>

[T]he purpose of the advertisement is to blur over the commodity character of things.<sup>15</sup>

Fashion is the realm in which the obsolescent character of the commodity is nourished and ritualised. In its tensed articulation of future and past, fashion heralds birth and death. This is one reason why the commodity is endowed with a spectral quality.<sup>16</sup>

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The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists, therefore, simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence, it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social. In the same way, the impression made by a thing on the optic nerve is perceived not as a subjective excitation of that nerve but as the objective form of a thing outside the eye. In the act of seeing, of course, light is really transmitted from one thing, the external object, to another thing, the eye. It is a physical relation between physical things. As against this, the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is, therefore, inseparable from the production of commodities.<sup>17</sup>

## THE TECHNOLOGY

It's Wednesday. I am at the airport, flying off to New York in a minute. Suddenly, I get a ring on the mobile phone from the secretary of a senior manager; he urgently needs the names of InterCon's nine Centres of Excellence (CoE). Of course, I don't have a clue; I might know 3 or 4 of them, but what about the remaining 5? 'The easiest thing is to call somebody who knows them by heart,' I am thinking. So I call a friend at the London office, but he doesn't know either. At least he is promising to ask some other people on his project. The manager's secretary rings again; he needs the names urgently, as he is about to go into an important meeting. The air is sticky; my flight is announced: 'All passengers on flight LH 458 to New York J.F. Kennedy, please proceed to Gate 47.' I am sweating; 'What do I do?' I connect my laptop to the mobile phone and log into Lotus Notes. I hope to find a database that has all CoEs listed. But it is hopeless. I can't find anything, and it takes ages to download the data. 'I really hate this technology.' But the senior manager is still waiting. I ring the friend in London again, 'Hopefully he's found something out by now.' Eureka! He is just on the other phone to a colleague in Paris who knows the names of all nine CoEs. 'Thank goodness for that!'

One of the main skills of the consultant is to keep her 'knowledge house' in order; that is, many hours, sometimes days, are spent to organize the knowledge commodity into databases, which are then accessible online via the company intranet or burnt onto CD-ROMs. It is important to have a good hierarchical system and search facilities in place; otherwise, the knowledge commodity might be lost forever.

What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind.<sup>18</sup>

Management consultancies have spent millions on 'Knowledge Management Systems', which is nothing else but the introduction of data/information collection processes and database systems. My job at InterCon was to do just that. I was responsible for implementing a rigorous system for the collection, transfer, and storage of 'knowledge.'

Knowledge management is much more than technology, but 'techknowledgy' is clearly a part of knowledge management.<sup>19</sup>

In the KM discourse knowledge and technology have become one thing; in KM's new-speak it is called 'techknowledgy.' Some of the favourite 'techknowledgies,' which supposedly help us to harness valuable knowledge from individuals and organizations, include: expert systems, artificial intelligence, desktop videoconferencing, hypertext systems such as intranets, and knowledge maps. The purpose of harnessing knowledge is, of course, clear: to turn knowledge into a valuable corporate asset, which will help to increase the competitive advantage of companies.

Indeed, the availability of certain new technologies such as Lotus Notes and the World Wide Web has been instrumental in catalysing the knowledge management movement. Since knowledge and the value of harnessing it have always been with us, it must be the availability of these new technologies that has stoked the knowledge fire.<sup>20</sup>

The mere existence of knowledge somewhere in the organization is of little benefit; it becomes a valuable corporate asset only if it is accessible, and its value increases with the level of accessibility.<sup>21</sup>

[T]he quintessential knowledge-creation process takes place when tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge. In other words, our hunches, perceptions, mental models, beliefs, and experiences are converted to something that can be communicated and transmitted in *formal* and *systematic* language.<sup>22</sup>

National Bicycle has exploited the tacit knowledge of highly skilled craftsmen at the POS factory. The company has externalized their tacit knowledge into a computer language, which operates manufacturing robots and semi-automated equipment by studying and observing their manufacturing skills.<sup>23</sup>

Machinic subjects, enhanced with prosthetics, wired up and plugged into inflowmation (a version of Marinetti's futurist rhapsody for a postindustrial age).<sup>24</sup>

Interested parties explain the culture industry in technological terms. It is alleged that because millions participate in it, certain reproduction processes are necessary that inevitably require identical needs in innumerable places to be satisfied with identical goods. The technical contrast between the few production centers and the large number of widely dispersed consumption points is said to demand organization and planning by management...no mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest. A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. Automobiles, bombs, and movies keep the whole thing together...It has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production, sacrificing whatever involved a distinction between the logic of the work and that of the social system. This is the result not of a law of movement in technology as such, but of its function in today's economy.<sup>25</sup>

In the KM discourse, knowledge is not separable from technology; organizations become a computer; organization and technology become one; they both work together in a symbiosis to turn tacit knowledge into economically valuable explicit knowledge.

Technology is viewed by...machine-obsessed modernists as a magical apparatus of social refurbishment whose scientific properties can remedy all predicaments through technical rationality.<sup>26</sup>

## **THE COLLECTOR**

Benjamin's collector<sup>27</sup> is someone who wanders through the fields of the dead commodity, the fossil, the ruin. For the collector, the commodity is a fetish that needs to be collected. It is the attempt by the collector to make a connection between past, present, and future. The collector is the hero of capital as he has completely internalised commodity fetishism. The collector treats the industrial commodity as its pet; it's a dead pet, however.

The formation of the discourse on intellectual capital is predicated upon the assumption that the traditional double-entry bookkeeping system is not able to reflect emerging realities. It is an inadequate tool for measuring the value of corporations whose value, it is claimed, lies mainly in their intangible components.<sup>28</sup>

Today, it is argued that company assets not only include material artifacts, properties, and financial assets, but also employees' and organizational knowledges. We must, therefore it is said, develop new systems to value intellectual capital, which would enable a more adequate valuation of companies' assets and provide tools for exploiting existing tacit and explicit knowledge bases more effectively. Such discourses clearly establish a view that knowledge must be seen as economic asset that needs to be valued, 'mined,' and 'harvested'.

We need only recall what importance a particular collector attaches not only to his object but also to its entire past... All of these - the 'objective' data together with the other - come together, for the true collector, in every single one of his possessions..., a world order, whose outline is the fate of his object.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion. Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found.<sup>30</sup>

## **THE GAMBLER**

It is Monday morning, 5:30 am. The radio-clock goes off. The news are on. A few hours ago (in the evening, US Eastern time), Alan Greenspan has made some comments about the state of the US economy and the over-hyped international markets – unfavourable comments. 'Shit,' I am thinking. I am jumping out of bed and switch the TV on. 'Nothing on CNN, let's check Bloomberg out.' The US market has not reacted yet; the comments were made after it had closed. 'What about Japan?' I go onto 'Videotext'<sup>31</sup> and find the market indices from Japan. 'Gosh! Minus 6%. That's bad, really bad! I need to sell some of my stuff before everybody else does!' I switch the PC on, connect to the Internet and try to log onto Consors, my online broker. The connection is very slow, even though it's

still before six in the morning. 'I'm probably not the first one to realize that the market is crashing; Jack and Pascal are probably trading their stuff this morning as well,' I think to myself. I'm getting a bit nervous. I need to place this sell-order *now*. I booked my car for 7:00 am, I need to be in Frankfurt by 9:00 am, and I still need to look at my presentation again. Better get going. I jump into my shirt and business suit, which my mum carefully ironed the night before. Thank goodness she is doing all the washing and ironing for me. I could really not do this as well. While I am looking through my presentation slides, I have some cereal for breakfast. 'Shit, it's 6:30 already! Mum, are you ready?' She said she would drive me to the airport, where I was going to pick up my rented car for the week. I run upstairs and check what Consors is doing. Finally, I can connect to their website. 'Ok, how much should I sell? I really don't trust this market. I probably should build up a bit of a cash position so that I am a bit more flexible. Ok, let's sell half of my Yahoo shares and transfer the cash to the high interest account with first-e. Come on, come on, hurry up. Where are my TAN numbers<sup>32</sup>?' I switch my Palm Pilot on and find the Excel sheet with the Consors TAN numbers. 'Thank goodness, the sale has gone through.'

It is useless to expect that a bourgeois could ever succeed in comprehending the phenomena of the distribution of wealth. For, with the development of mechanical production, property is depersonalised and arrayed in the impersonal collective form of the joint stock company, whose shares are finally caught up in the whirlpool of the Stock Exchange... They are...lost by one, won by another – indeed, in a manner so reminiscent of gambling that the buying and selling of stocks is actually known as 'playing' the market. Modern economic development as a whole tends more and more to transform capitalist society into a giant international gambling house, where the bourgeois wins and loses capital in consequence of events which remain unknown to him.<sup>33</sup>

Consulting is an encounter with fate. Many consultants know that they can only have this crazy life-style for a few years; apparently the average consultant is only two to four years in the business, before moving to some 'quieter' positions. During this time, one might as well do as much as possible: work through the night, work on weekends, jet around the world, take drugs, earn money, and gamble with it on the stock-market. It is a masochistic rush; it is life as shock; it is the desired encounter with the ephemeral commodity within the magnetic field of modernity; it is being on stage; it is show-time.

Well, what is gambling (I should like to know), but the art of producing in a second the changes that Destiny ordinarily effects only in the course of many hours or even many years, the art of collecting into a single instant the emotions dispersed throughout the slow-moving existence of ordinary men, the secret of living a whole lifetime in a few minutes – in a word, the genie's ball of thread? Gambling is a hand-to-hand encounter with Fate ... The stake is money – in other words, immediate, infinite possibilities ... Perhaps the next card turned, the ball now rolling, will give the player parks and gardens, fields and forests, castles and manors lifting heavenward their pointed turrets and fretted roofs.<sup>34</sup>

The gambler is driven by essentially narcissistic and aggressive desires for

omnipotence.<sup>35</sup>

## **THE PROSTITUTE**

In prostitution, one finds expressed the revolutionary side of technology (the symbolic side, which creates no less than discovers).<sup>36</sup>

As if the laws of nature to which love submits were not more tyrannical and more odious than the laws of society! The metaphysical meaning of sadism is the hope that the revolt of man will take on such intensity as to summon nature to change its laws. For, with women no longer wanting to endure the ordeal of pregnancy, the risks and the sufferings of delivery and of miscarriage, nature will be constrained to invent some other means for perpetuating humanity on this earth.<sup>37</sup>

The 'flexible,' often self-employed consultant constantly has to 'offer' her- or himself on the market. In this sense, one is bought as consultant just like the prostitute is picked up on the street corner. With the consultant and the prostitute the commodity becomes alive; human body and commodity becomes one thing. The consultant, the knowledge worker whores and is whored.

Prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the labourer.<sup>38</sup>

[T]he purpose of the advertisement is to blur over the commodity character of things. Allegory struggles against this deceptive transfiguring of the commodity-world by disfiguring it. The commodity tries to look itself in the face.<sup>39</sup>

Love for the prostitute is the apotheosis of empathy with the commodity.<sup>40</sup>

Prostitution opens up the possibility of a mythical communication with the masses. The emergence of the masses is, however, simultaneously with that of mass production. At the same time, prostitution seems to contain the possibility of surviving in a living space in which the objects of our most intimate use are increasingly mass articles. In the prostitution of large cities, the woman herself becomes a mass article.<sup>41</sup>

## **THE FLÂNEUR**

It looks as if there are many senior consultants around today. I just make it in time for my presentation this morning. It's not a client meeting, I am just presenting my work to my two bosses who I haven't seen for about a week. They have been busy on other projects, so I need to bring them up to speed with what's going on with IKM, the Internal Knowledge Management project, which I have been working on for about a month now. I have a fairly easy-going and relaxed relationship with my superiors. We joke a lot. We talk German most of the time, because we are in the German office, but occasionally we

slip into English, especially after international telephone-conferences which are held in English anyway. I like this international feel of my work. I frequently meet consultants from other national offices, I talk with people from around the world on the phone, and on Wednesday I am off to New York to participate in the bi-annual corporate university event. But back to my presentation. It's going to be fairly informal, at least this is what they said last week. But this informality can be just talk. I know I will be on stage, I need to perform. I need to show that the IKM project is doing well, or rather I need to show that I've been very busy indeed over the past week, i.e., I need to show that I've done everything I can to drive this project forward. At the same time, I need to be pointing out the problems and offer solutions; I need to define the way forward. In short, I need to show that I'm in full control of the project, strategically and practically. Even though I know that my bosses don't really care too much about external appearances, I made sure I put a red tie on this morning. I do like the combination of grey suit, blue shirt, and red tie. Sure, this seems to be the corporate uniform in consultancies, but it's beautiful and it works – it looks professional. I was talking to somebody about that the other day. He said, the red has something strategic, powerful, and distinct about it. The (dark) blue portrays the established, the professional, the proven expertise. The dark grey suit provides the image of the protecting cocoon, the understatement, the civilized, business behaviour.

The *flâneur's* translation of commodity into allegory is not a question of work or active transformation. It is passive, mimetic. The *flâneur* has a satanic *Einfühlung*, an empathy with commodities. ...He is not the hero, but instead performs the hero; not through action, but satanically through *Haltung* (bearing, posture, style). The *flâneur* allegorizes commodities through transforming them into a drunken stream or rush.<sup>42</sup>

But who exactly is the *flâneur*, what does he<sup>43</sup> do? Nothing! Just looking. The *flâneur* is a middle class, bourgeois man who strolls through 19<sup>th</sup> Century Parisian streets, preferably in places with big crowds and 'things' to see; for example, shopping arcades that began to appear in Paris at around 1850. The *flâneur* is a man of the crowd; he observes people, things, and happenings. He is always searching for the Other, the things which will occupy his gaze, and thus complete his otherwise incomplete identity. His gaze of objects satisfies his desire; it provides the meaning to his life. The *flâneur* has a special relationship with two particular types of objects: people and commodities. He turns both into a fetish. He observes them, he dives into them; he is the spectator of the Other.

[T]he *flâneur*<sup>44</sup> is a particular type of melancholic, a particular type of allegorist. The *flâneur* is the melancholic who works a particular type of raw material: the commodity. The *flâneur* sees the commodity literally as a fetish. Unlike Marx's proletarian, the *flâneur's* fetishism is not due to his mistaking use-value for exchange-value or the commodity form for the social relations of production. The *flâneur* starts from the commodity form as his raw material and transforms it into a fetish. That fetish is the allegory. The *flâneur* starts from a content, in this case an empty content, the commodity. His 'allegorical intuition' then translates the commodity into the form of a drunken exhilaration.<sup>45</sup>

## THE HAPPY FAMILY

Through frequent participation in social activity, also outside normal working time, leisure time became, to some extent, a part of corporate life which benefited the community, strengthened social bonds, and was perhaps also conducive to more productive work. When a group of fellow workers meet in a pub, there is a good chance that useful ideas and information will be exchanged. At the same time, as this illustrates the management's ambition to exploit the leisure time of personnel, there were probably important spontaneous elements in the fun activities. It is hard to evaluate where the border between 'manipulation' and 'spontaneity' lies when it is about back-patting, visible interest in the well-being of the employees, and social activities outside the (purely) instrumental sphere.<sup>46</sup>

[The 'community networking model'] highlights the importance of relationships, shared understandings, and attitudes to knowledge formation and sharing... It is precisely the sharing of knowledge across functional or organizational boundaries, through using cross-functional...inter-disciplinary and inter-organizational teams, that is seen as the key to the effective use of knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

[This implies] participation in an activity system about which participations share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities.<sup>48</sup>

Consultancies are very concerned to emphasize the fun element in their working culture; parties are frequently organized; consultancies do not hesitate to pay for expensive gala dinners or long 'working' weekends in a posh maritime or mountain resort. The construction of a community feeling is taken very seriously. This concern to create a closeness can be seen as the dialectical reaction to the extreme distance that characterises consulting life.

Such a levelling off of social struggles into modes of behaviour which can be defined formally and which are made abstract in advance allows uplifting proclamations concerning the future: 'Yet another way remains open – it is that unified planning will come about through understanding, agreement, and compromise'.<sup>49</sup>

[I]t is an illusion to think that this kind of agency is conclusive to lead and change organizations. The effects of purposeful action are uncertain and mostly limited, and the sense it makes depends heavily on the stance of the one who judges it.<sup>50</sup>

Understanding, agreement, compromising, knowledge sharing, talking – this is the rhetoric of 'soft' KM: 'Let's all live together in a happy (politics free) family.' This seems to be the 'vision' (admittedly overstated) for writers who advocate a social constructionist view of knowledge. Everything seems to come down to individual techniques of knowledge construction; that is, the subjective ways for individuals to negotiate their 'worlding' within intersubjective communities. This could be seen as an

extreme cognitivism or psychologism or, indeed, as Darwinism that is crudely extended into the social sphere: subjects must be in *harmony* with objective structures, otherwise they will die. Thus, the notion of a dialectic between subjects and objective structures – the entire notion of *struggle* between groups, the dominant and the dominated, the exploiting and the exploited, the powerful and not powerful – does not seem to exist within the discourse of social constructionism and ‘soft’ KM.

## THE FETISH DREAMWORLD

My mum is calling from downstairs ‘Are you ready? I think we need to go!’ ‘Yeah, I’m coming’. ‘OK, hurry up. Got everything? Laptop? All cables? Mouse? Palm? All papers? Presentation slides? Keys? Suitcase with all my clothes for a week? Passport? Gosh yeah, I need my passport. I am off to New York on Wednesday – coming back on Friday. Oh no, this is going to be a hassle’. Anyway. I am off. My mum is waiting outside with her BMW 3 series. She is in her business suit as well, because she will go to her client later on. She is a consultant as well. She has been for some years now. It’s going well, but the long hours and the constant pressure to perform have eaten into her overall health. She has been ill quite a lot recently. Twenty minutes later we arrive at the Sixt<sup>51</sup> office at the airport. I ordered a VW Golf. As junior consultant, I am only allowed a Class C car. But a Golf is not too bad. But this morning holds a nice surprise. They have run out of Class C models, so the rental lady apologized and asked whether it’s OK if I would get a free upgrade to a BMW 7 series. ‘Oh yeah,’ I thought. ‘That would be fine,’ I said. I was talking to myself: ‘I can’t believe it, I’ve always wanted to drive in a 7 series! What model is it going to be? Even a 750i?’ I brought the happy news to my mum. Then we drove up and down the underground car park to find my rented car. There it was. It was the basic model of the 7 series range. But never mind, I thought. My mum said ‘It’s amazing you are now driving a bigger car than I do. I guess that’s how it goes. Your international consulting career has now started. Today you are driving a BMW 7 series and on Wednesday you are flying to New York. Who would have thought this a few months ago. Ah MY son!’ ‘Yeah Mum, it’s all right. I need to go. Take care, have a good week. I will call you on your mobile!’ I boarded the dream-machine. It was a good feeling. The smell of leather and the cockpit-like scenery was something special. I switched on the engine. I love this sound, it’s very quiet but it got a feel of rough but smooth toughness. It’s like a tiger, powerful but elegant. That’s how it sounds. I brought some music tapes. A two and a half hour drive on the *Autobahn* can be quite boring. You can’t do anything. The roads are surprisingly empty this morning. Well, it’s still early. With ease I am accelerating to 220 km/h. I’m almost flying. It does not feel that fast. In fact if I wouldn’t have a speedometer I would say I am doing about 140 km/h. Incredible. It’s so quiet. I arrive at 10:00 am, half an hour later than anticipated. I park my BMW alongside the hordes of Mercedes, Audi and BMW. Most of them are corporate cars, which one gets as part of the salary package once one has reached the Principal stage within the company.

[In the mind of the fetishist] the woman has a penis, in spite of everything; but this penis is no longer the same as it was before. Something else has taken its place, has

been appointed its substitute, as it were, and now inherits the interest which was formerly directed to its predecessor. But this interest suffers an extraordinary increase as well, because the horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute... We can now see what the fetish achieves and what it is that maintains it. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it.<sup>52</sup>

Fetishism served Marx with the possibility to explicate his materialist-phenomenological conception of the sensuous, active, and desiring subject which is, nonetheless, embedded in a particular historical juncture of specific divisions of labour. This dialectic between libidinal investments and the structural politico-economic reality gives rise to a systematic misrecognition, which is not a false knowledge, Marx argues; it is modernity's actuality. It is this misrecognition, the fetishisation of the commodity, which characterises capitalist ideology; it is the world upside-down, just like in the camera obscura. The commodity can, therefore, be seen as the mimesis of the social character of labour; that is, the sensuous contact of labour has been copied to, displaced into the commodity. In other words, the dead commodity has 'swallowed up' the sensuous contact between people that was used to produce it in the first place, and in this way it acquires sensuousness itself; it dances.

Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, but especially his reading of erotic phenomena in modernity, is founded on a reformulation of Marx's analysis of the commodity through paradigms of a psychoanalysis-based theory of meaning and sexuality.<sup>53</sup>

That happens here through the ambiguity which is peculiar to the social relations and events of this epoch. Ambiguity is the figurative appearance of the dialectic, the law of the dialectic at a standstill. This standstill is Utopia, and the dialectical image therefore a dream image. The commodity clearly provides such an image: as fetish. The arcades, which are both house and stars, provide such an image. And such an image is provided by the whore, who is seller and commodity in one.<sup>54</sup>

The property appertaining to the commodity as fetish character attaches as well to the commodity-producing society – not as it is in itself, to be sure, but more as it represents itself and thinks to understand itself whenever it abstracts from the fact that it produces precisely commodities. The image that it produces of itself in this way, and that it customarily labels as its culture, corresponds to the concept of phantasmagoria ... The latter is defined by Wiesengrund [Adorno] 'as a consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being. It becomes a magical object, insofar as the labor stored up in it comes to seem supernatural and sacred at the very moment when it can no longer be recognized as labor ... All trace of its own production should ideally disappear from the object of consumption. It should look as though it had never been made so as not to reveal that one who sells it did in fact make it, but rather appropriated to himself the labour that went into it.'<sup>55</sup>

These...are common manifestations of what Marx referred to as commodity fetishism occurring in a developed capitalist culture, wherein capital and workers' products are spoken of in terms that are used for people and animated beings... Capital

appears to have an innate property of self-expansion, and this property diffuses into all economic life... Commodity fetishism is meant to point out for us that capitalist society presents itself to consciousness as something other than what it basically is, even though that consciousness does reflect the superficial and hypostatized configuration of society.<sup>56</sup>

The client buys (consulting) services because he is in a dreamy state of desires about progress, activity, surplus-value – constantly (re)produced by the techno-knowledge commodity machine of modernity. The consultant fills this desire through an excellent positioning within the commodity machine. This is not an evil act on behalf of the consultant, because he has as much (if not more) invested in these dreamy desires as the client has. Thus, the consultant-client relationship is a marriage of the empathy of the subject with modern knowledge: progress, technology, commodity – it is a satanic closeness that fills the space of distance between the consultant and the client.

The nineteenth century, a spacetime 'Zeitraum' (a dreamtime 'Zeit-traum') in which the individual consciousness more and more secures itself in reflecting, while the collective consciousness sinks into ever deeper sleep. But just as the sleeper – in this respect like the madman – sets out on the macrocosmic journey through his own body, and the noises and feelings of his insides, such as blood pressure, intestinal churn, heartbeat, and muscle sensation (which for the waking and salubrious individual converge in a steady surge of health) generate, in the extravagantly heightened inner awareness of the sleeper, illusion or dream imagery which translates and accounts for them, so likewise for the dreaming collective, which, through the arcades, communes with its own insides. We must follow in its wake so as to expound the nineteenth century – in fashion and advertising, in buildings and politics – as the outcome of its dream visions.<sup>57</sup>

One might want to ask: What is the difference between 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris and early 21<sup>st</sup> century global capitalism? In just over 100 years, the Parisian arcade has been expanded to cover most of the globe. The glass-steel architecture has been replaced by informational light waves that surround the globe like a second atmosphere. On sale in the arcades are not dancing tables anymore, but techno-knowledge commodities buzzing through the speedy information highways of shareholder values, ROI ratios, GDP wars, marketing blitzes, academic publishing fashions, politico-military Starwars games. Bright, informed, educated, with PhD, in self-control, body fit – the consultant continues to be deep at sleep, dreaming of some new fancy, Oakley glasses protecting him from the bright non-stop lightshows staged in the global arcade

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* this paper adopts the writing method of a montage. Montage is a method of destruction. Destruction splits images, images that have been taken for granted. But this splitting, this di-vision, is not a loss, but a chance to see the open field, to see the true heterogeneity of the present. Destruction is the cutting force of critique. This is the terrain of Benjamin's 'Destructive Character' (1978) who sees the world as war-zone: explosions, collapses, catastrophes, apocalypses. He is a force of darkness continuously cutting, breaking, di-viding, splitting. "The destructive character is always blithely at work", writes Benjamin (1978: 301), producing, not wholes, but fragments, components, dis-functions, pieces, percentages, shares, aphorisms, parts.

*The destructive character has no interest in being understood. Attempts in this direction he regards as superficial. Being misunderstood cannot harm him. On the contrary he provokes it, just oracles, those destructive institutions of the state, provoked it. (1978: 302)*

No vision guides him, he only sees di-vision. He is not a collector but a disperser. He never arrives, he is always already de-parted. His daily routine is one of clearing away, he needs fresh air to breath. He is always in the state of un/in-formation. He sees in every shiny monument the image of the next catastrophe.

*The destructive character has the consciousness of historical man, whose deepest emotion is an insuperable mistrust of the course of things and a readiness at all times to recognize that everything can go wrong. Therefore the destructive character is reliability itself. (1978: 302)*

He is not a member of the 'parliament of things' or the 'war cabinet'. He is the devilish nomad whose body is an 'open [battle] field'. He sees ways everywhere and goes everywhere, and therefore nowhere.

*The destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter walls or mountains, there, too, he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he has to clear things from it everywhere. Not always by brute force; sometimes by the most refined. Because he sees ways everywhere, he always positions himself at crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it. (1978: 302-303)*

This splitting, this destruction is violent because it de- and re-reads, de- and re-sees, de- and re-writes. But it is not a violence of the state, or of positive law. His cutting force is one of non-violent 'pure violence', which is beyond all violence. This destruction and subsequent reconstruction of reality is the political programme of the avant-garde, which rejects the limitations philosophers' grand aesthetic narratives have imposed upon art. For the avant-gardist art, in conjunction with technology, is a moment of subversion of dominant discourses of the techno-commodity spectacle; it is a tool for social and political action. Avant-garde art is not limited to the traditional 'pleasure domes' of aesthetic experience, i.e. the concert hall, the museum, the gallery; instead the avant-gardist seeks 'to take to the streets', to explode reality and the auratic place that surrounds traditional works of art and rejoin the remaining fragments to construct a new reality. In this sense, the avant-gardist is an allegorist, who "pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it of its function" (Bürger, 1984: 69). In other words, the avant-gardist creates allegorical meaning by extracting fragments out of their 'original' context and joining them to a new whole. Hence, for the avant-gardist "material is just that, material"; it does not have a universal meaning. The aim of avant-garde is to kill the 'intended life' of the material; that is, to tear "it out of its functional context that gives it meaning", to tear "it out of the life totality, isolate it, and turn it into a fragment" (Bürger, 1984: 70). Therefore the avant-garde work of art is an allegorical montage that aims to politically destruct existing reality and offer an alternative by joining up fragments of reality to a new whole. For Benjamin the method of montage is a prime example of how the artist uses technology to formulate a project of 'politicised art'. In his writings Benjamin discusses several forms of montage: photographic, painted, literary, musical and theatrical. As with avant-garde art the underlying technical principle of all these different forms of montage is one of destruction of objectively appearing reality. This is achieved by juxtaposing, or 'joining-up' different contextual realities in order to shock an audience into a fresh re-cognition (Leslie, 2000). In a photographic montage, for example, dissimilar images and texts are jointly presented in one composition, which provides the opportunity to make the photographic image function as a form of moral and political instruction (Buck-Morss, 1989: 60). For example, in the 1930s, during the rise of the Nazis in Germany, photomontages were used to ridicule the shallowness of the national-socialist political movement and attack Hitler personally. Benjamin also employed the method of montage in his own work. In *One-way Street* Benjamin constructed a montage of textual rather than photographic images. Similarly, his *Arcades Project* is a gigantic literary montage, which is a "juxtapositioning of quotations so that the theory springs out of it without having to be inserted as interpretation." (Buck-Morss, 1989: 73, quoting a letter from Adorno to Horkheimer). Benjamin writes about his method:

*Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them. (Benjamin, 1999b: 460; BGS V.1: 574, emphasis in original)*

Hence, montage as writing method must be seen to call the epistemological role and status of text into question; it shows every text to be a bricolage, a joining-up of past, present and future; with the author always being a guest in his own text. "The citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas" (Barthes, 1977: 160, emphasis in original). Another example of montage is Brecht's 'Epic Theatre':

*He [Brecht]...succeeded in changing the functional connection between stage and public, text and*

*performance, director and actor. Epic Theater, he declared, had to portray situations, rather than develop plots. It obtains such situations...by interrupting the plot. Here – according to the principle of interruption – Epic Theater...takes up a procedure that has become familiar to you in recent years from film and radio, literature and photography. I am speaking of the procedure of montage: the superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted...The interruption of action, on account of which Brecht described his theater as “epic”, constantly counteracts illusions on the part of the audience...Epic Theater, therefore, does not reproduce situations; rather, it discovers them...Yet this interruption here has the character not of a stimulant but of an organizing function. (Benjamin, 1999a: 778)*

Montage is therefore based on a constructive, speculative principle. It does not rely on the aura of historicity, instead montage “is crystallised in the idea of creating a ‘demand’ for a form of art that has not yet been invented” (Lindroos, 1998: 144); that is, it is an image that flashes up in a ‘moment of danger’. It is this engagement with ‘moments of danger’ that makes montage a politicised technique of art; it is not a mirror for ‘happy bourgeois families’, but a ‘hammer’ that seeks to destruct a given, objective, natural reality; it is a catastrophe, the re-writing of a text, of reality. Thus avant-garde art aims for a radicalisation of the everyday experience of art, which implies that all objects become a potential art object. In this sense avant-garde montage re-organizes reality and constructs a political project of hope:

*In the avant-gardiste work, the individual sign does not refer primarily to the work as a whole but to reality. The recipient is free to respond to the individual sign as an important statement concerning the praxis of life, or as political instruction. This has momentous consequences for the place of engagement within the work. Where the work is no longer conceived as organic totality, the individual political motif is no longer subordinate to the work as a whole but can be effective in isolation. (Bürger, 1984: 90)*

Benjamin’s ‘politicisation of art’ is therefore a ‘destructive principle’ that lets him speculate about a ‘revolutionisation’ of the imagination, an ‘energetisation’ of the modern subject, a visualisation of the unconscious. This involves the destructive tracing of all forces, especially Christianity and capital, that have blocked other possibilities of development in the past and therefore construct alternative auras, auras that connect to the unconscious powers of creativity as well as the materialist realities of capital’s modernity. This is what Benjamin had in mind when he talked about ‘profane illumination’. It is the bringing together of Marx and Freud, it is the joining up of fragments of surrealism’s ‘paranoid criticality’ and Marx’s materialism, it is the montage of allegories and fragments of reality that go beyond the simplicities of modernity’s mass-aestheticised, mass-cultured, mass-society, it is the awakening from the dream of the hell of our existence and the unlocking of repressed, hidden, displaced energies, it is a principle of montage of allegories and fragments to construct a different time, a different material reality, a different aura, a principle of a melancholia that erupts into a real ‘state of emergency’. In this ‘state of emergency’ we will be able to see the moment of danger, see the mass culture of super-subjects, the wars of military science, technology, knowledge, economies and commodities on a global basis, see the seductive simplicity of consciousness preoccupied with the fetishisation of time and image, see the commodified desires of the masses masochistically enjoying their own repression, alienation and distortion, see the naturalisation of fascism, see the stupidity of ‘you are either with us, or...’. In this sense a montage becomes a dialectical image, which has the task to smash a dreamworld into pieces:

*In the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, ‘what has been from time immemorial.’ As such, however, it is manifest, on each occasion, only to a quite specific epoch – namely, the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes, recognizes just this particular dream image as such. It is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation. (Benjamin, 1999b: 464; BGS V.1: 580)*

<sup>2</sup> This is a joke that frequented the Internet for several months in 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Whenever I use ‘consultant’ in this paper, I refer to ‘management consultants’, my main empirical focus.

<sup>4</sup> This is the impression I get from listening to the students I teach at Warwick Business School.

- <sup>5</sup> Robin Fincham (1999: 2).
- <sup>6</sup> Internal Knowledge Management.
- <sup>7</sup> 'InterCon' as well as all names mentioned in relation to the research site are invented synonyms.
- <sup>8</sup> [T]he word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. (Augé, 1995: 94)
- <sup>9</sup> Marc Augé (1995: 78).
- <sup>10</sup> Walter Benjamin (1973: 134; BGS I.2: 632).
- <sup>11</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999a: 83-84; BGS II.2: 439).
- <sup>12</sup> Karl Marx (1976: 163).
- <sup>13</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 112; BGS V.1: 169).
- <sup>14</sup> Robin Fincham (1999: 3).
- <sup>15</sup> Walter Benjamin (BGS I.2: 671, Buck-Morss' translation).
- <sup>16</sup> Michael Taussig (1993: 233-234).
- <sup>17</sup> Karl Marx (1976: 165).
- <sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 204; BGS V.1: 271).
- <sup>19</sup> Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak (1998: 123).
- <sup>20</sup> Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak (1998: 123).
- <sup>21</sup> Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak (1998: 18).
- <sup>22</sup> Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi (1995: 230-231, my emphasis).
- <sup>23</sup> Ikujiro Nonaka, Katsuhiko Umemoto and Keigo Sasaki (1998: 167).
- <sup>24</sup> Esher Leslie (2000: x).
- <sup>25</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1979: 121).
- <sup>26</sup> Esther Leslie (2000: 39).
- <sup>27</sup> Here I should mention that Benjamin, even though constantly out of money, was himself a collector of books and paintings. He apparently loved special first editions of books and modern art, for example by Paul Klee. His reflections on collecting must have been very much influenced by his own experiences.
- <sup>28</sup> Ali Yakhlef and Miriam Salzer-Mörling (2000: 20).
- <sup>29</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 207; BGS V.1: 274).
- <sup>30</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 211; BGS V.1: 279).
- <sup>31</sup> German TV text service.
- <sup>32</sup> Security PIN numbers for financial transactions on the Internet.
- <sup>33</sup> Paul Lafargue, cited in Benjamin (1999b: 497; BGS V.1: 621).
- <sup>34</sup> Anatole France, cited in Benjamin (1999b: 498; BGS V.1: 622).
- <sup>35</sup> Edmund Bergler, cited in Benjamin (1999b: 510; BGS V.1: 635).
- <sup>36</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 493; BGS V.1: 616).
- <sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Berl, cited in Benjamin (1999b: 493; BGS V.1: 616-617).
- <sup>38</sup> Karl Marx's statement in the 1844 Manuscripts, cited in Buck-Morss (1989: 184, n147).
- <sup>39</sup> Walter Benjamin (BGS I.2: 671, Buck-Morss' translation).
- <sup>40</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 511; BGS V2: 637).
- <sup>41</sup> Walter Benjamin (BGS I: 668, Buck-Morss' translation).
- <sup>42</sup> Scott Lash (1999: 329-330).
- <sup>43</sup> The Parisian *flâneur* was indeed a *man*; a man in a full bourgeois wardrobe including a large hat, stick and cigar. To visualize the *flâneur*, please see Parkurst Ferguson (1994). The sexual bias of Baudelaire and Benjamin has been challenged recently by feminist writers who argue that women, too, engage in *flânerie*; see, for example, Gleber (1999), Wolff (1985) and Wilson (1992).
- <sup>44</sup> *Flânerie* is the activity of strolling, of diving into the crowd of modern urban space. It is originally tied to a specific time/space juncture: 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, the capital of modernity, the place where early bourgeois capitalism moved into modern high capitalism (Tester, 1994). The *flâneur*, the man who carries out *flânerie*, has been allowed to leave his Parisian *Heimat* (hometown) and has been taken up as a motif in a number of domains, most notably the literature, sociology and art of metropolitan modern life. The literary figure of the *flâneur* originates in the prose and poetry of Charles Baudelaire, most notably in his collection *Paris Spleen* (1970[1869]). The *flâneur* was then picked up by Walter Benjamin as one of his 'heroes' in his *Arcades Project*.
- <sup>45</sup> Scott Lash (1999: 329).

- <sup>46</sup> Mats Alvesson (1992: 191).  
<sup>47</sup> Swan *et al.* (1999: 273).  
<sup>48</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991: 98).  
<sup>49</sup> Theodor Adorno (1967: 42).  
<sup>50</sup> Klaasjan Visscher (1999: 2).  
<sup>51</sup> German Car rental company.  
<sup>52</sup> Sigmund Freud (1977: 353; 2000: 385)  
<sup>53</sup> Sigrid Weigel, 1997: 184, my translation)  
<sup>54</sup> Walter Benjamin (1973: 171; BGS V1: 55)  
<sup>55</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 669; BGS V.2: 822-823)  
<sup>56</sup> Michael T. Taussig (1980: 31).  
<sup>57</sup> Walter Benjamin (1999b: 389; BGS V1: 492-493).

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