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Seeing the potentialities at the intersection: A reflection on performativity and processuality mindsets

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Abstract. In this paper, we propose to approach performativity and processuality as mindsets. We suggest that researchers interested by or pursuing performative studies should recognize more explicitly the inherent processuality of performativity. After offering broad overviews on performativity and process thinking, we highlight that both mindsets rest on a similar view of reality as processual, and both share a strong commitment to qualitative empirical work. In spite of the differences that exist between the two mindsets—such as their treatment of agency, the place of socio-materiality and their approach to continuity and change—we contend that acknowledging and engaging more directly with processuality benefits performative studies, as it helps these studies to deal with some of the challenges they often face. In doing so, performative studies could refine their analyses of managerial and organizational phenomena and would also increase their contribution to our field.

Keywords: performativity, process thinking, management and organization studies

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INTRODUCTION

The last two decades or so have been quite exciting in management and organization studies, both in empirical and conceptual terms. A vast array of new topics has entered our research field, expanding our area of interest. Similarly, concepts that are new to our discipline have inspired researchers to shed light on unexplored dimensions of management and organizations. Performativity is one of these concepts. Building on different research traditions, organization scholars have mobilized the concept of performativity to study a variety of phenomena, ranging from the constitution of identities in the work place (e.g. Rittenhofer & Gatrell 2012), to the power effects of accountancy and strategy discourses (e.g. Fauré, Brummans, Giroux & Taylor, 2010; Kornberger & Clegg 2011), the multiple facets of the concept of performance and values (Albu 2018; Guérard, Langley & Seidl 2013; Küpers 2017; Reinhold 2017), the co-constitution of organizational theories and realities (e.g. Cabantous & Gond 2011; Vásquez, Bencherki, Cooren, & Sergi, 2018), and scholars' subversive engagement and role in fostering emancipatory organizational change (e.g. Esper. Cabantous, Barin Cruz & Gond, 2017; Fleming & Banerjee 2016; Knudsen 2017). This variety in the mobilization of performativity has in turn prompted welcome reviews of the concept's place in our field. These reviews have highlighted the diversity of research traditions (e.g. Gond, Cabantous, Harding & Learmonth, 2016) or discussed the commonalities

underlying them (e.g. Muniesa 2014; 2018; Garud, Gehman & Tharchen 2018).

While we see clear potential in developing a performative research agenda in organization studies, especially for phenomena that have so far been approached from a representational perspective (e.g. Garud, Gehman & Giuliani 2018), this paper's spirit is different: our objective is not to review past performativity research in organization studies but to initiate a reflection on the similarities, differences and potential cross-fertilization between performative analyses of organizational phenomena and another tradition that has flourished in our field: process thinking.[1]

Process thinking, another of these lively streams that has gained increasing recognition in organization studies over the past decades, made some of its first marked appearances in our field through the concept of *becoming*, as discussed by Chia (1997, 1999), Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Nayak and Chia (2011), whose contributions pointed to the potential of pragmatist philosophy for our explorations of organizational phenomena. Furthermore, by acknowledging the relevance of this tradition for organizational thinking, these authors, as did Hernes (2009, 2014) and Cooper (as early as 1976, but also in his subsequent contributions), invited organization scholars to adopt a different *ontology*, a process ontology.[2]

Starting from the premise that performativity and processuality are *mindsets*—that is, specific takes on reality (or ways of approaching the world) combined with a given analytical apparatus—rather than unified theories, we propose in this piece to explore what the latter could bring to the former. Beyond the diversity of topics addressed by performativity and processual scholars, and despite the fact that performativity and processuality studies come from different traditions, these two mindsets share at least two important commonalities: their methodological commitment and the idea that reality is processual. We propose in this piece to explore these commonalities, while also considering the differences between these two "sister" research streams, and ultimately to sketch some of the potentialities emerging from such a dialogue. Specifically, we wrote our piece from the perspective of performative studies, whose processuality, as we contend, is often under-acknowledged. We therefore focus on the potentialities emerging from the explicit recognition of processuality in performative studies.

Our paper is organized as follows. We start with a broad overview of performativity and processuality. We then discuss the commonalities and differences between these two mindsets and outline some of the benefits that a deeper engagement with processuality can bring to performative studies in organization and management. We close the article with a few concluding remarks.

It should be noted, at the outset, that our aim is neither to review the literature on performativity and process thinking, nor to delve into the minutiae of the internal debates that animate each of these streams. Although some nuances will inevitably be lost by doing so, going into the details of each research tradition would divert us from exploring what lies at the intersection of the two streams.

FIRST OVERVIEW: PERFORMATIVITY

Performativity: a travelling concept. Throughout the 20th century, the idea of performativity has travelled among many disciplines (Denis 2006;

1. See Aggeri (2017) for a comparison between performativity and two research streams in organization studies: Foucauldian analysis and instrument-based approach to organizations.
2. It should be noted that process ontology was not completely absent from our field before the turn of the millennium: Karl Weick's thinking about organizing was already clearly alluding to a processual conception of what organizations are (see e.g. *The social psychology of organizing*, Weick (1979), also discussed by Hernes 2009, among others).

Gond et al. 2016; Loxley 2006). It has inspired the philosophers of language John Austin and John Searle; the French post-structuralist thinkers Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard; as well as sociologists working in the field of science and technology studies, such as Andrew Pickering, Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. Performativity is also a prominent feature of the work of two renowned American gender theorists, Judith Butler and Karen Barad. Last but not least, it is key to the field of performance studies (Loxley 2006). In fact, performativity has generated so many important thoughts in the social sciences that it would be difficult to review them all. In what follows, our aim, therefore, is not to offer an exhaustive panorama of the works inspired by the concept of performativity, but instead to distil the essence of what we propose to call the *performative mindset*. We do so by first presenting Austin's original idea of performative utterance and then outlining three versions of performativity developed in the field of science and technology studies.

Austin and the notion of performative utterances. The idea of performativity can be linked to the British philosopher John Austin, who was concerned with the use of ordinary language and the relation between language and truth, statements and facts (Austin 1962). Unlike early-20th century philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, who supported the correspondence theory of truth, Austin developed the idea that some utterances (e.g. "I sentence you to death", "I promise to go to the cinema with you tomorrow") do not describe (or *constate,* as he said, using a neologism borrowed from French) states of affairs, but change, transform or enact them. These utterances are "performative" in that they do not (just) "say" something, but rather "do" something. Performative utterances hence are neither true nor false but are "happy" (i.e. felicitous) or "unhappy". According to Austin, two conditions are required for a performative utterance to be "happy". First, a conventional procedure must exist and be followed. The sentence "I declare you husband and wife" for instance, is felicitous only if a wedding ceremony exists and is properly executed by the appropriate persons and in the right circumstances. Second, the speaker's intention is sincere. Without these two felicity conditions, a performative utterance is infelicitous, i.e. it is a misfire.

The performative idiom in science. The idea of performativity has also been used in the philosophy of science (e.g. Hacking 1983) and social studies of science to formulate a critique against the traditional functionalist/positivist/representationalist view of science. For example, in their 1987 paper, the anthropologists Shirley Strum and Bruno Latour oppose an *ostensive* definition to a *performative* definition of the social link, and in so doing contrast two models of (scientific) knowledge production. While the ostensive model considers that society is "out there" and that scientists, "standing outside of society" (Strum & Latour, 1987: 785), aim at discovering society's invariant "laws", the performative model considers that "society is constructed through the many efforts to define it. It is something achieved in practice by all actors, including scientists who themselves strive to define what society is" (p. 785).

The sociologist Andrew Pickering developed a similar critique of the traditional representationalist conception of science in his 1995 book titled *The Mangle of Practice: Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science*, where he advances a performative conception of scientific practice. For Pickering, "the representational idiom casts science as, above all, an activity that seeks to represent nature, to produce knowledge that maps, mirrors or corresponds to how the world really is" (Pickering, 1995,

p. 5). The performative idiom, on the contrary, moves away from this conception of "science-as-knowledge". While acknowledging that scientific practice produces representations of the external world, this idiom invites us to "explore what the connections between knowledge and the world actually look like as they are made in scientific practice" (Pickering, 1994: 417). Importantly, Pickering offers a performative inquiry of scientific practice that puts the emphasis on "the material, social, and temporal dimensions of science" (Pickering,1995: 6) and gives a key role to non-human actants (such as scientific instruments). Yet, an important characteristic of Pickering's approach, which is inspired by actor-network theory, is its post-humanist orientation, and, accordingly, its critique of a human-centred view of agency.

In a similar fashion, the French sociologist and actor-network theorist Michel Callon has developed a performative analysis of economics (where economics is broadly defined to encompass economics in its strictest sense along with the related disciplines of finance, marketing, management, etc.). In his performativity of economics thesis, Callon (1998, 2007) argues that economic models and theories do not describe an external pre-existing economy (made up of competitive markets and populated by utility-maximizer consumers, profit-maximizing firms, etc.), but participate in the construction of the economy (see also MacKenzie, Muniesa & Liu 2007). Generally, Callon defines (theory) performation as a process, made up of trials, errors and struggles, by which the world of a model is actualized. His take on theory performation (or actualization), which is largely informed by actor-network theory, puts the emphasis on the sociomaterial assemblage of humans (e.g. economists) and non-human entities (e.g. economic tools such as cost-benefit analysis), which together actualize the theory so that it makes a difference. For instance, for rational choice theory to matter in organizations, an actor-network linking a set of axioms (written in academic books and journals) together with decision practitioners and decision tools (such as decision trees, excel spreadsheets, or a workforce scheduling software) is needed (Cabantous & Gond 2011; Cabantous, Gond & Johnson-Cramer, 2010).

Barad's version of post-humanist performativity: Agential realism theory. Finally, a recent illustration of the post-humanist/performative trend in social studies of science and technology can be found in the work of Karen Barad, an American feminist theorist with a doctorate in physics. In her 2007 book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Barad extends Niels Bohr's philosophical framework and renews our understanding of agency and causality, time and space, and discourse and materiality (Barad, 2007).

Like Latour, Pickering and Callon, Barad considers that performativity is an attempt to move away from the metaphysical assumptions associated with representationalism, namely the beliefs that "beings exist as individuals with inherent attributes anterior to their representation" and that scientific work aims at discovering laws (Barad, 2003: 801). But Barad also develops an original critique of the recent linguistic/semiotic/interpretative/cultural turns in the social sciences, which, in her view, give "too much power to language" by turning "every 'thing'—even materiality — (…) into a matter of language and some form of cultural representation" (Barad, 2003: 801). Her post-humanist theory of performativity thus aims at challenging the humanist notion of agency and at reconsidering the role of materiality in a way that is even more radical than that proposed by actor-network theory scholars who grant the same roles to human and non-human entities in scientific explanation. Yet Barad

questions the "givenness of the differential categories of 'human' and 'nonhuman'" and calls for a systematic inquiry of the practices by which "these differential boundaries are stabilized and destabilized" (Barad, 2003: 808).

In order to do so, Barad (2003, 2007) develops a unique analytical apparatus and vocabulary. In particular, she advances the notion of material-discursive practices, which put the emphasis on the mutual entanglements between materiality and meaning, as well as the concepts of intra-action and agential cuts. It is through intra-actions (within phenomena, rather than interaction between ontologically distinct entities), that agential cuts—or separations between "subjects" and "objects"—are enacted.

Performativity as a mindset. While limited, our presentation of performativity has allowed us to review the unique onto-epistemological assumptions of performativity inquiries. Accordingly, and in line with some other scholars, we contend that performativity is a "mindset" (Garud, Gehman & Tharchen 2018; Muniesa 2014—i.e. take on reality rather than a "theory" or a "method"—and that this mindset has two important (onto-epistemological) features. First, with the notion of performativity, scholars insist on the idea that descriptions "add to reality" in that they "instantiate or effect their own referent" and, thus, "provoke a new situation, a new ontological deal" (Muniesa 2014: 18-19).

Second, all performativity scholars adopt a similar relational ontology. Accordingly, they are primarily interested not in pre-existing "things", but in "things" happening and in relations between "things". This point is especially clear in Callon's version of performativity, which relies on actor-network theory and therefore applies the semiotic principle of relationality not just to signs and language but to all kind of materials (Law 1999). It is also core to Karen Barad's post-humanist version of performativity, which approaches phenomena through the relational concept of material-discursive practices. In short, and as Muniesa (2014) put it nicely, the performative mindset is characterized by two ideas: first, the idea of *signification as act* and, second, the idea of *reality as effectuation*.

Thus far, we have purposively presented a limited number of versions of performativity developed in the social sciences and have highlighted two features which are at the core of all performative analyses. In what follows, we offer a succinct presentation of the processual mindset.

SECOND OVERVIEW: PROCESS THINKING

The mark of process thinking in organization studies. Process thinking has a long history in philosophy, going back in Western thought to the Antiquity philosopher Heraclitus. Since then, it has thrived in many areas, including more recently in organization studies. If pragmatist philosophy has clearly marked how process thinking has been taken up in our field, a variety of thinkers have also influenced this interest for process (see Helin, Hernes, Hjorth & Holt, 2014 for a broad overview of process philosophers and social thinkers that can inspire researchers in organization studies). As exemplified by the recent *Handbook of Process Organization Studies* (edited by Langley & Tsoukas 2016), the mark of process thinking in organization studies can be seen in several dimensions: in the influence of process philosophers (e.g. Dewey, Mead, Deleuze); in the framing provided by a number of social theories (e.g. the practice perspective, actor-network theory, ethnomethodology); in the seminal work of key organization theorists (e.g. Karl Weick, Robert Cooper,

Robert Chia); in methodological choices; and, consequently, in the variety of focal objects of inquiry.

Processuality as a mindset. As we proposed with performativity, we suggest that on a general level, process thinking can be described as a mindset. The variety of studies that claim or adopt an anchoring in process ontology—or come under the broad label of "process organization studies" suggested by Langley and Tsoukas (2010)—is such that it would be difficult to offer a proper overview in a few pages. This is especially the case given that similarly to performativity, process thinking has been taken up in our field in a *graded* way: not all empirical studies build on this mindset with the same intensity and commitment. But before addressing this gradation in taking up a process mindset, we outline the fundamental ideas of process thinking.

First and foremost, at the heart of process ontology lies a key reversal: change, not stability, is the normal state of the world: the world is by definition in constant state of emergence and of becoming (Tsoukas & Chia 2002) or irremediably on the move (Hernes 2014). Chia reminds us of how Whitehead, writing about reality, summed this up elegantly: "Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'" (Whitehead,1929: 28, cited in Chia 1999: 218); in other words, process is world-making (Chia 1999). In this sense, process ontology can be defined as a mindset or specific orientation about how phenomena are conceived (Langley & Tsoukas 2016). Among the various terms used to characterize this mindset, two terms—emergence and temporality—stand out. Viewing change as a constitutive force implies that phenomena are conceived as emerging in flows. Even more, it means that these flows are given ontological priority as what defines phenomena (Rescher 1996, 2000). "[R]eality *is* change", as Nayak and Chia (2011: 292, emphasis in original) remind us, pointing to the inherent indetermination of process, revealing that a world on the move is one constantly replete with potentialities.

Process ontology implies that we consider things and phenomena in and as movement in time, thus highlighting the cardinal importance of time. Phenomena emerge and evolve as they are experienced and performed in time. However, time should not simply be seen as a dimension along which phenomena unfold; instead, process ontology requires thinking *in* time (Hernes 2014; Nayak & Chia 2011), since it sees "time as an immanent unfolding force that carries the past into the present and the future rather than a 'container' or 'axis' in which events are deemed to 'unfold over time'" (Nayak & Chia 2011: 296).

Yet, it would be an error to present process thinking as a simple reversal of perspective where change would replace stability. This is what sometimes happens, for example, when the distinction between nouns (pointing to entities and stability) vs. verbs (prioritizing movement and change) is overly emphasized, when in fact what should matter is not the opposition, but the relationality, between nouns and verbs (Bakken & Hernes 2007). Since process thinking is about simultaneity, ideas that are usually opposed can now *cohabit*:

> "Processes elude us precisely because they involve simultaneously impermanence and stability. Perhaps the most difficult task is to accurately describe this composite state of verb and noun." (Bakken & Hernes 2007: 1601)

This composite state leads us to see that nouns/entities and verbs/processes are not in binary opposition, but intrinsically connected, where entities are configurations provisionally stabilized through processes (designated by verbs) that constitute and transform them at the same time. It is this inseparable view of entities and processes that is lost we when simplistically oppose nouns and verbs.

This necessity of thinking at the same time about entities and process, change and stability, helps clarify another important feature of the process mindset. The ontological precedence given to change does not mean that stability is non-existent, nor that everything is always "up for grabs", in an unfixed state. As the above discussion on nouns and verbs highlights, it suggests instead that any form of stability has to be produced and accomplished over time to be perceived as such. In other words, what we (seem to) see and experience as stability, as a form of continuity and as the persistence of phenomena (in organizational contexts and elsewhere) has to be produced, maintained and sustained through engagement in action and in time—which at the same time opens the door to transformation. Stability is never achieved, and it is *stabilization*—always provisional, never permanent—that we can notice and experience. Accordingly, we can see the incorporation of process ontology's main ideas in our field as an attempt to de-stabilize (or question the stability of) organizational phenomena and the notion of organization itself *au premier chef*. Since this mindset aims at revealing both how organizational phenomena are produced and what is involved in their situated accomplishment, its adoption brings important empirical implications.

However, as alluded to previously, organization scholars' interest in process has produced various levels of engagement with process thinking, which implies that process thinking may or may not occupy an ontological place in the vast array of studies currently labelled as process studies. This has led some scholars to talk about "strong" vs "weak" takes on process. Whereas a "strong" process orientation corresponds to the process mindset as we have defined it—i.e. it adopts a process ontology and considers that entities and processes are irremediably interlinked (Hernes & Weik 2007)—a "weak"[3] process orientation does not go as far and views entities and processes as two distinct categories. This "strong" vs "weak" distinction, which echoes Van de Ven and Poole's (2005) process vs. variance views, however, is limited, since there are more than two ways of considering how entities and processes relate to each other, and how stability is produced. Hernes and Weik (2007) accordingly suggest talking about *exogenous* and *endogenous* views of process. While the exogenous view conceives processes as taking place in a context (e.g. an organization), and hence adopts a spatialized vision of processes, the endogenous view instead adopts a temporal vision of process (see also Hernes, 2014):[4] "the stability of entities takes place as part of the process itself, as stable entities are both constituted by process and at the same time are constitutive of process" (Hernes & Weik, 2007: 253).

PERFORMATIVITY MEETING PROCESS THINKING?

As postulated at the outset of our text, we contend that performative studies would benefit from explicitly acknowledging the processuality inherent in performativity. Yet, such an explicit acknowledgement does not imply that performativity and processuality are interchangeable. Coming

3. We deliberately place "strong" and "weak" between quotation marks because this way of categorizing process perspectives is colloquial, and importantly, because these terms might suggest a value order, where "strong" approaches would be superior to "weak" ones. This kind of evaluation is not a project we wish to pursue and is outside the main point of our article.

4. Hernes and Weik's (2007) typology is further specified, which leads them to identify four distinct views of process. See their table 1 on p. 261 for details.

from different traditions, the two mindsets present some differences in spite of having strong commonalities. To close our broad overview of performativity and processuality, we hence turn to two important commonalities between these two mindsets and outline some key differences.

A first element that binds the two mindsets together is their methodological *commitment*[5] for qualitative empirical work: both mindsets have a clear determination to follow action and what is involved in it and to be firmly rooted in situations or events—while recognizing that these events are always flowing and resist any form of complete capture. Although researchers working in each mindset might have preferences for different empirical materials, ranging from archival to video ethnographic data, in both cases they will need to have a close involvement with empirical material in order to document performativity or processuality. Both mindsets strive for a deep and prolonged engagement with *what is happening*, in time, in order to reveal how phenomena come about. Opting for methodological approaches that would not allow this closeness to be gained would not be coherent with the mindsets' postulates.

Another element that is common to both mindsets is the idea that reality is processual. We have seen that while various conceptualizations of performativity exist, they all approach reality as effectuation, and invite us to study how phenomena are constituted, de-constituted and re-constituted (Garud, Gehman & Tharchen 2018; Kuhn, Ashcraft & Cooren, 2018).[6] We see this interest in the "bringing about" of reality in all versions of performativity, whatever the thing (e.g. a theory, a gender, a discourse) which is *actualized* or *realized* (to borrow Callon's terms). For performativity scholars, this realization is anything more than a temporary stabilization, and a form of becoming. The idea that reality is effectuation is therefore fully consistent with process thinking, for which reality *is* process. However, if there is a processual dimension to performativity, it does not imply that every process is performative. Without overly restricting the scope of performative inquiries, it is worth keeping in mind that the performativity mindsets developed primarily as an alternative to the representationalist approach. Importantly, it also invites us to put the emphasis on a specific form of processes, namely processes that connect statements (e.g. ideas, theories and concepts) and their representations in the material world.

Yet, there are several important differences in the way process and performativity studies approach the idea of reality as effectuation. A first difference is related to the *treatment of agency*. While processual inquiries can accommodate various approaches to agency—including a human-centred view of agency, as evidenced by the many processual studies that focus on individuals' sensemaking (e.g, Brown & Lewis 2011; Sonenshein 2010)—performative inquiries all adopt a post-humanist approach, which leads to the deconstruction of human agency. For Pickering (1994), "The performative idiom invites us to think symmetrically about agency: human beings are not the only actors around; the material world acts too" (p. 414). Nyberg's (2009) analysis of the customer call practice as well as Ford, Harding, Gilmore and Richardson's (2017) understanding of leaders as material presence, which are both inspired by Barad's work and question the subject/object divide, are two neat illustrations of this specific take on agency (see also Glaser 2017). In short, while the question of "who (and what) acts" is central to performative inquiries, it has up to now been less

5. We talk of commitment rather than methodological orientation since both mindsets have strong implications in terms of methods, which go beyond what is usually understood by the term "orientation".

6. Note that Law and Urry (2004) encapsulate this point eloquently, when they argue that social sciences and methods are performative in the sense that "[they] are productive: they (help to) make social realities and social worlds" (p. 390), and "…they have effects; they make differences; they enact realities; and they can help to bring into being what they also discover" (p. 393).

central to processual inquiries in our field.

This variety of treatment of agency leads to a second important difference between performative and processual inquiries: *socio-materiality.* Due to their post-humanist orientation, performativity scholars often approach the continuous (re)constitutions of phenomena through the notion of (socio-technical) agencement; and their inquiries show how these agencements could have been different; while process scholars do not necessarily put *socio-materiality* at the centre of their analysis of the becoming of phenomena.

A third—and rather subtle—difference between the processual and performative take on effectuation is visible in the way they approach *change and continuity.* While in organization studies, process scholars often place change and movement at the fore, performativity scholars tend to be more concerned with the idea of durability, since their primary aim is to understand how phenomena become *visible* (rather than how a phenomenon is in constant creation and recreation).[7] For instance, when performativity scholars study how a theory (e.g. rational choice theory) makes a difference in an organization, they tend to show the durability of the socio-technical agencement that underlies the performativity of this theory. Similarly, when they study identities, they tend to focus on how identities are constantly performed through a myriad of repeated acts, and hence put the emphasis on a process of iterability and the constant repetition of norms. Yet, since both mindsets ultimately reflect on endurance and enduring phenomena, differences in the way they approach change remain subtle, and reflect a slightly different sensitivity to change and continuity, rather than a clear divergence of views.

A fourth element that distinguishes many performative inquiries from processual inquiries is *relationality*. The specificity of the performative mindset stems from its constant and obvious adoption of a *relational ontology* (see e.g. Cooren 2018 and Kuhn et al. 2017 for two insightful presentations of relationality). Relationality is a starting point of Barad's theory. It is also at the heart of Pickering and Callon's versions of performativity, which are inspired by actor-network theory and accordingly apply the semiotic principle of relationality "ruthlessly to all kind of materials—and not simply to those that are linguistic" (Law 1999: 2). Relationality is clearly compatible with processual analyses adopting a "strong" process view and is in fact explicitly recognized by some researchers (see, for example, Cooper, 2005 and Hernes 2014)—but it is less compatible with the so-called "weak" processual analyses.

Finally, another specificity of the performative mindset comes from its initial and enduring interest in the *relationship between discourse and "reality"*. The idea of performativity initially developed out of a critique of correspondence theory of truth (e.g. Austin), and latterly of representationalism (e.g. Pickering, Callon, Barad). This focus is visible in most performative work in organization studies, in particular, in performative analyses of strategy discourses (e.g. Kornberger & Clegg 2011; Vargha 2018). Processual inquiries, on the other hand, do not put the emphasis on the critique of traditional conceptions of the relationships between discourse and reality (even though it is likely that processual scholars would agree with a performative take on discourse). This highlights that both mindsets have emerged from different traditions and, consequently, have been preoccupied with different problems.

7. We are aware that in speaking in this way, we seem to place all researchers in clearly defined boxes, whereas, in reality, individual researchers and studies are more nuanced. For example, the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) stream of inquiry, which rests on ideas found in both mindsets, cannot be placed in either camp, as it is concerned both with continuity and change. See e.g. Schoeneborn, Kuhn and Kärreman, (2018) for an overview of CCO thinking in organization studies.

THE BENEFITS OF EMBRACING PROCESSUALITY IN PERFORMATIVE STUDIES

At this stage, it should be clear that the performative mindset is inherently processual. Many performative studies, especially those influenced by Callon (2007) who defines performation as a process, offer a "process" model in order to account for performativity (see e.g. Ligonie 2018; Marti & Gond 2018; Svetlova 2016; Vargha 2018). Yet, even in these studies, processuality often takes the backstage, as performative scholars focus their attention on other aspects, such as performative work (e.g. Beunza & Ferraro, 2018), performative practices (e.g. Boldyrev & Svetlova 2016; Cabantous & Gond 2011), or the boundary conditions of performativity (e.g. Marti & Gond 2018). In some cases, processuality can even be lost. In this final section, we put forward our suggestion for performative scholars to bring processuality back to the fore in their studies by outlining three benefits that an explicit recognition and serious engagement with processuality can bring to performative inquiries.

Embracing processuality to avoid the ballistic pitfall. An important characteristic of the performative mindset is that, fundamentally, it is not so much about effects as it is about effectuation. Yet performative inquiries can easily fall into a "ballistic" pitfall, as Muniesa (2018) calls it, by trying to expose causal links, recursive interactions or feedback loops between entities, or by identifying a (too) linear performative process. Instead of aiming to draw a neat trajectory (which the "ballistic" adjective evokes), performative inquiries should focus on revealing the "bringing about" of the phenomena they study without enclosing this process "inside" a clear trajectory.

We suggest that one effective strategy to avoid such a pitfall, which implies a spatialized view of processes where performativity would happen in a context or along a trajectory and would eventually reach an end state where performativity is achieved, is to embrace processuality to its full extent. Being "more" overtly processual when conducting performative inquiry will necessarily redirect our attention to the *becoming* of the phenomenon we study, rather than its supposedly "final" (static) state, since such a final state does not exist in process ontology. In addition, by being more attuned to processuality, performativity scholars will also become more familiar with a vocabulary that makes it possible to talk at the same time about continuity and variation and stability and impermanence, , since process thinking puts the emphasis on simultaneity. This should help performative scholars move away from linear conceptualizations of performativity, and instead offer conceptual stories that feature the continuity and the multiple materializations or modes of existence, not just over time but also at a given moment, of the phenomenon they study.
By relationally linking being and becoming, process thinking focuses on the transformations, which diverts us from more stabilized language and conceptualizations. Hence, we see embracing processuality as a way for performative studies to avoid being trapped in what could appear as rather linear and causal explanations.

Approaching performativity as a process to advance the discussion on types of performativity. The question of the types of performativity is an important topic in performativity studies, especially those inspired by the work of Callon and MacKenzie. MacKenzie (2006) for instance distinguishes between three subsets of performativity: generic performativity (when an aspect of economics is used by market participants); effective performativity (when the "practical use of an aspect

of economics has an effect on economic processes" (MacKenzie, 2006: 17)); and Barnesian performativity (when "the practical use of an aspect of economics makes economic processes more like their depiction by economics (MacKenzie, 2006: 17)). MacKenzie's account of performativity, however, is controversial. Mäki (2013), for instance, argues that it points to causal relationships between entities, rather than constitutive relationships, and is therefore not true to Austin's conception of performativity.

Again, we suggest that an explicit processuality take on performativity can help researchers recast the debates on the types of performativity, especially when it comes to the empirical explorations of performativity. Concretely, acknowledging the processuality of performativity means that the focal point of performative inquiries becomes the process of realization itself. Accordingly, conceptual efforts also shift and, instead of approaching performative processes through their outcomes—to capture the "degree" of performativity achieved—and/or through the (boundary) or "felicity" conditions that make process performative, we can create other—and ideally more productive or generative—conceptualizations of performativity processes.

This is not to say that results or effects of performative processes are not important but to remind us that the process itself matters more than its effects. Put differently, it is the process—more than its effects—that deserves to be at the forefront of the empirical story and theorization's effort. And, what makes a process performative is not (just) the "final" state it supposedly reaches, but the fact that the process twines or twists together, even "imperfectly", two worlds that are often opposed: the spiritual world of abstractions—populated by supposedly abstract, intangible, ethereal ideas—and the real world (or "reality") that is inhabited by material bodies, tangible objects, technologies, etc. In our view, the value of performative inquiries stems from their invitation to study this specific category of processes, and hence to overcome the much-challenged—yet still very much ingrained—view that clearly separates and opposes, on the one hand, an external state of affairs, and on the other hand, ideas, statements, texts and, generally, all sorts of representations that are meant to describe, record or transcribe this external reality. Full engagement with the processuality of performativity can help us theorize a fully integrated co-existence of what is usually presented as two "worlds", hence avoiding the assumption that they exist separately and in opposition, but rather set in motion a dynamic between them. Another important value of processuality in this respect is that it opens the door to a fluid analytical approach to performativity, which does not impose fixed trajectories between the two worlds, and acknowledges *de facto* a gradation in the intensity of the performative process instead of being too preoccupied with the task of categorizing performative processes based on their outcomes—especially since there are no "outcomes" as we commonly think about them to "discover", only flows.

In short, embracing processuality while conducting performative studies redirects the attention from results or effects to processes and places the stabilization process itself centre stage. Such stabilization can be partial, incomplete or shaky (hence echoing various types of performativity), but as long as the process forges ties between ideas or abstractions and material things so that these ideas become concrete and materialized, then a performative process is taking place.

A processual take can alleviate the problem of empirically "proving" performativity. Last, but not least, by being explicitly processual, performativity scholars can better alleviate another issue that they might

face: that of having to "prove" the performativity of the phenomenon they study. Epistemologically speaking, performativity scholars do not aim to demonstrate phenomena, but rather strive to explore, shed light and reveal the intricacies of their becoming. Yet, the issue of providing convincing evidence of performativity remains a challenge. If researchers focus their attention more centrally on the process, it becomes easier to expose how this process of realization, or "making realities", happens in the specific case that they are documenting, what it implies and what it constitutes. It also adds nuances to what is achieved by also including its potential misfires and failures.

Closely linked to the empirical commitment we previously discussed, an obvious implication for scholars recognizing the inherent processuality of performativity is to acknowledge that they have to adopt a different mindset, not just a different vocabulary. Replacing the verbs "to influence" or to "shape", for instance, by the verb "to perform", or substituting the term "implemented" by "performed" in an article is unlikely to be sufficient to leverage the heuristic potential of a clearly processual performative mindset. Such inquiries should instead lead to a profound re-conceptualization of the phenomena studied and this different conceptualization will, then, be reflected in a different vocabulary. This heightened sensitivity to processuality can help researchers keep in mind that their task, when conducting a performative inquiry, is to *retrace* some of the many transformations that eventually made the focal phenomenon take the form or mode of existence rendered visible in their studies, and to try to keep them all present, in spite of their variety and variations, in their writing, in their choice of words and in the narratives they present. Moreover, since process ontology insists on fluidity, it should be easier to approach materiality itself as a spectrum—or a rainbow—and hence to offer performative narratives that show how the phenomena under study can be at the same time, an ideation, a discourse and a tangible thing, etc. This might require engaging with novel forms of data collection, analysis and writing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our main argument in this article has been simple: we have suggested that by being more attentive to the processuality of performativity, and by fully embracing the idea that performativity is an ongoing journey (Garud, Gehman & Tharchen 2018), performativity scholars should be better able to tackle, or deal with, some of the challenges they commonly face. Studying managerial and organizational phenomena from a performative mindset still has a great potential to deepen our understanding of what animates organizations of all kinds. Management fashions, algorithms, evaluative practices, new (and older) managerial techniques, uses of big data—the list of management and organizational topics that could be explored with a performative mindset is long. Even reflecting on what is happening in our own academic practice, with all kinds of rankings and metrics, can be extended with performativity (see for example Mingers & Willmott 2013). However, we contend that to do so in a rich(er) way, requires a clearer engagement with processuality, especially to deal with three challenges that performative studies face.

In this article, we have focused on three challenges, namely avoiding the ballistic pitfall when describing performative process, advancing performativity studies by characterizing or categorizing performative processes and, finally, providing convincing evidence of performativity. While the acknowledgements we have discussed here do

not simplify the challenge of writing up performative accounts, we consider that they could assist and support researchers in their explorations of performativity. Finally, another important challenge for organization scholars interested in performativity is to demonstrate the value of this mindset to study organizational phenomena. In our view, this challenge can be tackled by being clear about the specificities of the mindset and by circumscribing the scope of performative studies to what is at the heart of performativity, namely the multiple and complex relationships between some relatively immaterial statements, ideas and theories and their visible and tangible expressions (or materialization).

In conclusion, by recognizing explicitly their proximities with process thinking, we contend that performative studies can *sharpen* our understanding of organizational phenomena. Our hope is that by doing so, i.e. explicitly putting processuality at the heart of performative inquiries, we can further develop our performative understanding of organizational phenomena and fully leverage the heuristic potential of the performative mindset.

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