

The next section looks forward with three chapters considering what might be. Chapter 9 discusses the importance of cultural literacy for open, global organisations. Then, Chapters 10 and 11 become rather speculative – ‘embracing *Open* in the New Millennia’ and seeking to address the question ‘should you go open?’ They are the kinds of chapters where someone at least half convinced by the foregoing arguments of the book would want to read on. However, the more discerning reader might demand more: a more critical evaluation with hard data rigorously conceived and collected in support of the various dimensions of the model of open organisation that the author seeks to promote. Would I buy this book? Personally no, but I can see that it might appeal to MBA students and practitioners seeking ideas for how to shape their newly launched business venture.

Arne Carlsen, Stewart Clegg and Residar Gjersvik, *Idea work: Lessons of the extraordinary in everyday creativity* (Cappelen Damm Akademisk), Cappelen Damm: Oslo, 2012; 208 pp.: 9788202403379

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“What drives extraordinary creativity in everyday work? How do people do it? And how do we talk about it?” are the questions Carlsen, Clegg, and Gjersvik ask and *Idea Work* attempts to answer in their refreshing and imaginative book. They describe *Idea Work* as “activities concerned with generating, selecting, realizing, nurturing, sharing, materializing, pitching, and communicating ideas in organizations” (p. 15). Their ambition is to emphasize on an organization’s ability to create favorable contexts for their own success and for collective effort in with the aim to move “from brilliant ideas to final results” (p. 5). This ambitious aim draws on a 4-year qualitative research conducted among six leading Scandinavian organizations in the architecture, the press, or the oil industries. Carlsen, Clegg, and Gjersvik present creativity as a concrete, collective, and everyday form of practice through an in-depth investigation including more than 400 hours of observation, over 200 interviews, feedback sessions, and active experimentation.

*Idea Work* presents 10 chapters sorted in four parts: *Interwoven*, *Affective*, *Material*, and *Controversial*. These 10 chapters cover 10 qualities of extraordinary idea work. The first part *Interwoven* presents what seem to be the foundations of working with ideas: “Prepping” and “Zooming out.” By prepping, individuals are “carefully preparing, building, and revitalizing knowledge” (p. 46) to use it in the most effective way. Concretely, this preparation work involves collecting data, knowledge, processes, to synthesize them and to dig in them with the aim to seize its core content. This “revitalization of knowledge” should allow individuals to make full use of it. Even though this advice sounds like “data mining systems,” it is far from information technology (IT) solutions by arguing that knowledge is first, and above all, among individuals. In this way, the authors try to prevent a “knowledge-loss crisis” which may happen when some workers holding crucial information—which is, contrary to what some may guess, not necessarily directly linked to production or financial outcomes—leave (Parise et al., 2006). This first quality must be associated with “Zooming out,” the ability to disconnect from small details to focus on the whole.

The three following parts present three ways to allow idea work in an organization. The first way, named *Affective*, is deliberately focused on the importance of passion, meaning, and imagination at work. “Craving wonder” describes the ability to be amazed by projects, by what is inside. This wonderment constitutes the source, the process, and the result of working with ideas. “Enchanted and powerful idea work begins in wonder, proceeds by means of a series of moments of wonder, and ends with an explanation that produces, when first seen or experienced, yet another new and

powerful experience of wonder” (p. 94). “Activating drama” highlights the powerful feeling of belonging to a project, to understand what is at stake and to dedicate oneself to accomplish a duty. The authors suggest methods to achieve this commitment and this feeling of belonging to something meaningful. By encouraging workers and managers to ask questions such as “What are we really doing? Why do we come to work each day? What is the *meaning* of the ideas we bring to life?” (p. 117), asking the fundamental question of purpose. Approaching such a concept in a management handbook is not common, and this constitutes a positive signal. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that this issue is considered in a functionalist way, as though the meaning (of ideas) had simply to be defined and imposed collectively. This is a peculiarity of the book: while it is based on a qualitative and interpretivist investigation, the issue of reflexivity is not discussed and the way the book is written may indicate the pursuit of universal best practices’ identification. “Daring to imagine” stresses the necessity of staying optimistic, encouraging to dig deeper, daring *to dare*, and celebrating successes but also investing efforts when there is a failure. This chapter describes how healthy management looks like and how management should be.

The third section *Material* connects idea work with the physicality of work. The quality “Getting physical” operates backward by willing to replace—at least at some steps—new technologies, dematerialization, and digitization of work by physical supports such as sketches, boards, or hand-noted drafts. This quality seems to support—without telling it—the “Zooming out” quality since the purpose of this is to create more connections, understand things as a whole instead of a part. “Double rapid prototyping,” the second quality of *Material*, aims to produce work with increasing quality, thanks to continuous reviewing. Prototyping involves workers—of course—but it can also involve customers or suppliers. “The prototype, then, has the function of assimilating many voices and testing their combined relevance in a speedy manner” (p. 169).

The last section *Controversial* proposes what authors consider “controversial qualities.” “Liberating laughter” consists in “processes of energizing co-creation through playfulness, puns, and humor that builds social ties, ease seriousness, relax constraints in thinking, and encourage original combinations of knowledge” (p. 182). This definition summarizes the content of the whole chapter: introducing humor and spontaneity in organizations is the key to diminishing stress and encouraging team spirit. To prevent criticisms from some who may think that introducing laughter without any limit is an opened door to unserious work, the authors underline the importance to avoid “laughter without seriousness [...] or believing that laughter without deep knowledge leads to innovation” (p. 194). “Generative resistance” is not very different from “Daring to imagine” and consists of accepting to be stuck while remaining optimistic and keeping walking. The innovative part of “Generative resistance,” compared to “Daring to imagine,” is that it encourages us to shake the certainties and to ask questions such as “Why do we work like this? How do we handle this situation? What about a change?”

Eventually “Punk production” goes a step further than “Generative resistance.” As with this previous quality, it encourages us to “mobilize against established ways, opening up and realizing ideas with a high levels of originality and value” (p. 216). But the object is not only to question the authority. This last quality consists of a mantra: “Do It Yourself” which means here “Do it your own way, take initiatives and follow your instinct even when others think you are wrong.” The main issue with this last quality is that the authors choose to see a positive ending to it: “Punk production is a temporary break with norms and the dominant order that leads to radical innovations: temporary, because if successful, it creates the new norm” (p. 219). And what if it is not successful? Can everyone do “punk production”? And if not, how do we legitimate the ones who can and the ones who can’t? And eventually, if you decide who is allowed to “punk production,” how can you still call it “punk”? These are a few questions addressed to this “quality” and challenging its practicality.

Generally, *Idea Work* has many qualities. The book is full of testimonials, anecdotes, and stories of people, companies, and projects gathered from among the organizations that have been investigated. The presence of all this contextual information contributes to making the reading fluid and pleasant. However, some may regret their overabundance and decide that they drown the overall argumentation without adding value. Practitioners should appreciate the “Tips for practice” presented in two pages at the end of each chapter. They really provide knowledge and synthesize concisely the content of the chapter while giving real “practicable” keys to implant the qualities explained.

Finally, the main interest of *Idea Work* resides in its contribution to management practice. Even though the qualities listed by the authors may sometimes seem idealistic or hard to implement given the reality of many organizations, especially in a post-crisis period—in particular the “Affective” part of the book—*Idea Work* is resolutely optimistic and strives to demonstrate—with many examples to support—that creativity is not the privilege of artists. Did Carlsen, Clegg, and Gjersvik achieve their ambitions? Probably, since they develop an analysis combining scientific and practical relevance and since their characterization of idea work allows them to consider industries and companies not limited to the traditional knowledge-intensive firms (KIFs) where innovation and knowledge-related challenges have been widely studied (Alvesson, 2004). But the implementation of such qualities may appear tricky to skeptics, considering their organizational contexts may be far removed from the ones analyzed by the authors. Nevertheless, by exposing positive outlooks about human relations at work, innovation, creativity, meaning at work, *Idea Work* constitutes an interesting source of inspiration for workers and managers in quest of new practices for more challenging, exciting, and meaningful work. For this reason, Carlsen, Clegg, and Gjersvik’s well-documented and pictorial contribution is unique and constitutes an inspiring piece of work for many scholars studying and promoting innovation at work in the mainstream functionalist perspective.

## References

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Parise S, Cross R and Davenport T (2006) Strategies for preventing a knowledge-loss crisis. *MIT Sloan Management Review* 47(4): 31–38.

Kevin Morrell, *Organization, society and politics: An Aristotelian perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2012; 232 pp.: £71.00, ISBN 9780230304468 (hbk)

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Academic fields of study continually push forward, searching for new research gaps or original contributions, but it is important that we do not leave behind valuable insights and ways of critical thinking. In this vein, *Organization, Society and Politics: An Aristotelian Perspective* by Kevin Morrell sets out to demonstrate the relevance of the practical philosophy of Aristotle to modern forms of organisation. This provides an importantly broad, interdisciplinary conception of what can be considered as an organisation related to forms of association and to the act of organising. Morrell here addresses organising as political, in terms opposed to exclusion and privileging, establishing the foundation for a ‘radical’ challenge to capitalist ideology. In this way, the book is both ambitious and wide-ranging.

Morrell begins by elaborately setting out a defence of Aristotle, for example in relation to his arguments for slavery and his misogyny, rather than engaging in detail with the problems of organising, which could alienate some readers. As a result, the book is a little slow to get going. These