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***“A snake’s coils are even more intricate than a mole’s burrow.”\*\****

## **Individualization and Subjectification in Post-disciplinary Regimes of Work\*\*\***

In contemporary discourse it is almost commonplace to describe societies and work relations as highly individualized. In this article we develop a conceptual framework that enables us to discuss processes and practices of individualization as political technologies. Following a line of thinking influenced by Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, we first illustrate three different regimes of work. The main focus is on elaborating and illustrating characteristics of the post-disciplinary regime of work which allows us to systematize fundamental shifts in the way of organizing and managing work. We then analyze contemporary strategies for producing the “appropriate individual” as “technologies of modulation” that focus on the production of the autonomous, flexible and adaptable subject. We suggest that these strategies are highly ambivalent and must not be seen in a deterministic way. They are necessarily an interplay of technologies that determine the conduct of individuals and “technologies of the self”. This is reflected in the process of subjectification that contains both possibilities for increased subjection *and* for self-creation.

**Key words: Governmentality, Individualization, Post-disciplinarity, Regimes of Work, Subjectification, Technologies of the self**

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\*\* We borrowed this line from Gilles Deleuze (1995: 182).

\*\*\* This paper is part of a larger research project in which we explore modes of organizing relations to self and others in the (post-disciplinary) field of the „Creative Industries“. We gratefully acknowledge the funding of the project entitled „Re-creating organization: Organizing work and the work of organizing as ethico-aesthetic practice. A theoretical and empirical study in the Creative Industries“ by the Austrian Science Funds (FWF Projectnr. P19026-G11).

Article received: February 27, 2006

Revised version accepted after double blind review: July 17, 2006.

## 1. Introduction

It is now almost commonplace to describe modern societies as well as modern employment relations as highly “individualized”. “Individualization” has been understood in a number of different ways. Most of the theories of individualization start from dualistic assumptions, setting society against the individual, or the individual against the organization. Individualization here refers to the process of progressive dissolution of traditional social milieus, which turn individuals back on themselves and provide them with more or less “risky” and “precarious freedoms” (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1996, 2002). From this perspective, individualization and associated new forms of employment (flexible forms of employment, temporary employment, part-time work and flexible time arrangements, freelance and e-lance etc.) appear as more or less rational strategies that shift the risk from employers to employees.

From a critical perspective this is usually seen as a threat to individual integrity (e.g. Sennett 1998) and as undermining the collective interests of employees (e.g. Ackers et. al. 1996; Edwards 2003; Heery and Salamon 2000). On the other hand, prophets of the “entrepreneurial revolution” – such as Tom Peters (1999) – welcome the “free agent nation” and celebrate individualized forms of employment as liberation from bureaucratic forms of control, that are seen as patronising and repressive of human creativity. “The growth of the knowledge worker”, so the argument goes, “has created a new opportunity for *freedom and autonomy from* the controls exercised by organizations” (Guest 2004: 2, emphasis added).

Critics tend to reject claims of increased freedom and dismiss them as pure ideology, which hides the reality of the increasing precariousness of jobs, the proliferation of insecure jobs, new forms of poverty, new structures of unequal distribution of wealth and income, uncertainty and the like.

Although the critical and the affirmative positions differ in their evaluation, they seem to share the basic assumption of a negative concept of power, which sees power mainly as repressive of individual freedom. They also seem to share a specific concept of “freedom”: Freedom is understood as “freedom *from*” (in contrast to “freedom *to*”), so that the weakening of rules and regulations appears as an increase in “freedom” and “autonomy” (see critically Knights/Willmott 2002).

In this paper we want to develop a conceptual framework, which allows us to discuss processes and practices of individualization differently. In particular we want to show how the work of Michel Foucault, who fundamentally challenges these conventional assumptions, allows us to see the “autonomy” asserted as highly ambivalent and as an effect of a political strategy that is immanent in practices of organising social relations in general and work or employment relations in particular. His work allows us to understand the “concept of the ‘free worker’ who thrives on independence and high levels of employability” (Guest 2004: 2) as part of contemporary governmental strategy that seeks to mobilize rather than repress “autonomy”. In contrast to conventional analyses Foucault does not work with dualistic categories, such as “organization” and “individual” or “society” and “individual”. For Foucault both organization and the individual are historical constructions or even “fabrications”:

“The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called ‘discipline’. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained by him belong to this production” (Foucault 1977: 194).

This view implies to focus on practices and processes of organizing or individualizing rather than on entities (such as “individuals” or “organizations”) and to focus on the *productive* (rather than repressive) nature of power. Foucauldian concepts have already had a great impact in management- and organization studies (MOS) and have produced a productive line of thought (see e.g. Barratt 2003, Bröckling et. al. 2000, Townley 1993, 1994, 1998, Jacques 1996, Jones 2002; Knights/Willmott 1989, Knights 2004, Miller/Rose 1995). With this paper we want to continue this line and at the same time go beyond established contributions. Most of the Foucauldian analyses in MOS have focused on the spread of disciplinary power and have analyzed processes of individualization as strategies of disciplinary power that lead to subjection (Knights/Willmott 1989). Only a few scholars have followed Deleuze’s (1995) call to extend the disciplinary perspective, which has become so prominent in MOS, in order to make contemporary modes of organizing work and its effects on modes of being intelligible.

This is what we want to do in section II of the paper. Here we characterize three different “regimes of work” in order to systematically draw attention to significant changes in the way work is organized. For the development of these regimes we start with Foucault’s analysis of the sovereign and disciplinary power (Foucault 1977). We then draw on the work of Gilles Deleuze (1995) who has outlined some dimensions in which fundamental transformations of the disciplinary regime can be observed and Foucault’s analytical scheme can be extended. This opens the conceptual space for problematizing and analysing contemporary – *post-disciplinary* – regimes of work and the associated modes of subjectification.

Any regime produces images and identities of the “ideal worker” or employee (see e.g., Flecker/Hofbauer 1998, Hodgson/Carter 2004, Jacques 1996, Miller/Rose 1995) and any regime relies on and is dependent of “appropriate individual(s)” (Alvesson/Willmott 2001) for its own reproduction. This is not given, but rather has to be produced.

In section III we analyze strategies and technologies of making and producing the “appropriate individual” for the post-disciplinary regime. In order to avoid determinism, which is one of the main criticisms against established (in particular “disciplinary”) Foucauldian perspectives, we draw on the concept of subjectification that Foucault developed in his later works (1986, 1988, 1997). This understanding implies *both* subjugation *and* a certain form of self-creation or “self-crafting” (Chan 2000, Rabinow/Rose 2003: xxi).

In the final section IV we briefly reflect on the implications of our analysis for the process of subjectification which we understand as process of “folding” normative models of action and conduct and relating them to oneself and one’s own life. The

ambivalence in the process of subjectification is particularly obvious in the post-disciplinary regime of work in which creativity, “autonomous” and “responsible” action and decision are not only allowed but demanded of the “appropriate individual”.

## 2. Regimes of work

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) analyzed the historical transformation or modification of sovereign societies to the disciplinary society. Disciplinary societies which gradually formed from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards reached their heyday at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since around the time of the Second World War, it seems that we were entering a new configuration. A number of analyzes support this argument (e.g. Bauman 2001; Castel 1991, Castells 2000, Deleuze 1995, Hardt/Negri 2000, Munro 2000, 2005, Opitz 2004, Riethmüller 2005), so that it is plausible to talk about a post-disciplinary regime which has fundamental implications for the way work is organized.

We use the term “*regime of work*”<sup>1</sup> in order to delineate a more or less coherent assemblage that encompasses various discourses (e.g. scientific as well as prescriptive discourses in management that create normative models of action and conduct), practices and technologies. In this section we briefly characterize these different regimes along the dimensions that Gilles Deleuze (1995) has outlined in his “Postscriptum on Control Societies” in order to extend the analytical grid that Foucault (1977) developed. These dimensions are illustrated with various examples from the field of management and organization. This allows us to weave together heterogeneous diagnostic findings from the field of MOS that indicate fundamental shifts in the way work is organized and managed. The *post-disciplinary regime* will be the main focus of our analysis since we are primarily interested in the present. We are not suggesting a linear sequence from one regime to the next, nor do we suggest that one completely replaces the other. Each one is dependent on its predecessors as a condition of its possibility, integrating and modifying associated technologies and practices (see also Knights 2004, Lazzarato 2004) – hence we call it “post-disciplinary” (rather than “non-“ or “anti-disciplinary”).

*Sovereign societies* were based on the absolute right of the sovereign to “*take life or let live*” (Foucault 1981: 138). The sovereign occupies the central position; he holds power which is demonstrated by a spectacular, excessive outbreak. In sovereign societies power is *visible* whereas the subjects remain in the shadow and are invisible. Power is exercised top-down. Its principle is “*levying-violence*” (Foucault 1977: 219). In sovereign societies labour is a force to be exploited rather than to be carefully organized. Basically, labour is forced labour, as in slavery or serfdom. This was also

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<sup>1</sup> A similar term, used by Foucault, is the term “apparatus” (see Rabinow/Rose 2003: xvi). We prefer the term “regime” since we want to avoid the mechanistic associations that the term “apparatus” may evoke. Another alternative would be “strategic assemblage”. Like “regime” this term stresses the connection of various, heterogeneous elements. The term “strategic” stresses the directedness of this grouping together without assuming a strategic mastermind. In this sense the term catches very well what we want to describe in this section. However, particularly in English language it has strong technical or technological connotations. This is why we prefer “regime”.

the case in the early stage of capitalism where “the principle bone of contention was the oppression itself” (Bauman 1988: 72). The people who were subjected to the drill of the capitalist factory wished to retain, or restore, the right to self-determination, which was still in the memory of craftsmen and artisans of earlier days (ibid.). *Exclusion* is the ultimate threat on which sovereign power is based and the fear of punishment is the main effect (Knights 2004: 17). The historical figure of the worker, who characterizes this regime, is the proletarian worker of early capitalism: exploited, without protection created by rules and regulations which limit the power of the sovereign. S/he is an element of a mass in which his/her individuality is of no interest to the sovereign, unless s/he commits some crime, which is seen as a threat to the right of the sovereign. Continuous work had to be ensured by repressive forms of control that were the answer to the lack of worker discipline (Türk 1995, Pongratz/Voß 2000, Voß/Pongratz 2003). In sovereign societies individualization is “ascending”. Those on the top of the social hierarchy are more individualized than those on the bottom. They are recognized as individuals in a certain way: “The more one exercised power, the more one was marked as an individual – by honours, prestige, even by the tombs in which burial takes place” (Dreyfus/Rabinow 1983: 159).

Historically, *disciplinary society* succeeded sovereign societies with altogether different aims and principles of operation (Deleuze 1995: 177). In disciplinary societies the general aim is the meticulous organization of production instead of crude exploitation, to combine and organize the power of the forces rather than to appropriate (Lazzerato 2004). With the emergence of capitalism and factory production, discipline arises as a new “type of power, a modality for its exercise” (Foucault 1977: 215). It can be characterized by the following points:

The function of discipline is to produce “docile bodies”, which are “subjected and practised” (ibid.: 138). Discipline approaches the body as an object to be analyzed and separated into its constituent parts. It is divided into units that are taken up separately and subjected to precise training. The “means of correct training”, exercises and dressage attempt to form the body and integrate it into the productive machine. In place of discontinuous excess which has characterized the sovereign power, discipline sets “investment of duration by power” (ibid.: 160). Discipline works by defining rhythms and by binding bodies to the imperatives of the production machine. Discipline does not work by sporadic interventions and corrections but rather its principle is “to work as continuously as possible” (Dreyfus/Rabinow 1983: 154). It imposes a timetable which orders and regulates productive activities. Discipline is characterized by a *linear time* whose moments are integrated with each other and which is oriented towards a stable end-point. It “must also be understood as machinery for adding up and capitalising time” (Foucault 1977: 157). It divides duration into successive or parallel segments; each of which must end at a specific time; it breaks down time into separate threats and organizes these threats according to an analytical plan: “successions of elements as simple as possible, combining according to increasing complexity” (ibid.: 158).

Discipline further works by organising individuals in *space*. It creates enclosed spheres (e.g. the factory as the space of production, the school as the enclosed space

of learning, the hospital as the enclosed space for treating illnesses etc.) and proceeds by distributing individuals and fixing them according to an orderly grid. Internally, it creates an *analytical space*, which is divided and partitioned: “Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed. One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation and their unusable and dangerous coagulation” (ibid.: 143).

Discipline finally reverses *visibility*. In contrast to the regime of sovereign power the subjects are made visible whereas power tends to be invisible. Disciplinary power finds its ultimate realization in the *Panopticon*. Jeremy Bentham’s marvellous architectural invention, which was designed as an “inspection-house” that is polyvalent in its applications and may be used “whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed” (ibid.) includes all the strategic elements of disciplinary power. It is not just a technology of power, nor even a “dream building”. Rather, it is “the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form” (ibid.: 205). It is “in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use” (ibid.: 205).

The Panopticon arranges individual bodies in a circle. It divides individuals from each other and makes sure, that the horizontal lines are interrupted by walls so that the inmates can neither see each other nor are able to communicate with each other. In this arrangement the inmates are constantly in a position of being seen without however seeing.

The distribution of individuals in space (each individual in one cell), *dividing* and cutting off horizontal communication, making subjects visible and at the same time making power invisible are essential. In the Panopticon “[e]ach individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (ibid.: 200).

In contrast to sovereign societies, individualization is “descending” rather than “ascending”:

“... as power becomes more anonymous and more functional those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized; it is exercised by surveillance rather than ceremonies, by observation rather than commemorative accounts, by comparative measures that have the ‘norm’ as reference rather than genealogies giving ancestors as points of reference; by gaps rather than deeds” (ibid.: 193)

The *examination* is a central individualising technology. This “tiny operational schema that has become so widespread” (ibid.: 185) makes it possible to *objectify* the individual and also “manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects” (ibid.: 184-5). It creates visibility, introduces individuality into a field of documentation and permits making each individual a “case”. Individuals can be classified, normalized, judged; they can be trained and corrected. This technology, which has been professionalized and integrated into a multiplicity of modern technologies of management and Human Resource Management (see e.g. Townley 1994, 1998) is central to the production of “useful” (Foucault 1977: 211) individuals.



The disciplinary individual appears as part of an *energetic machine*. It is called on to perform predefined actions and it is subjected to “a whole micropenalty of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behaviour (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle character, insolence), of the body (incorrect attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency)” (ibid.: 178). In this regime, it is “[t]he nonconformist, even the temporary one” (Dreyfus/Rabinow 1983: 158) who is the object of disciplinary attention and corrective intervention.

In particular *Taylorism* and “scientific management” can be seen as an application of disciplinary power “to greater organizational depths” (Townley 1998: 195). “Scientific selection of workman”, measuring and regulating performance according to predefined criteria, ordering bodies in a fixed grid, individualized treatment of workers and a “protonormalizing” (Link 1998) strategy, which adapted workers to fixed norms defined by the experts of “scientific management” and excluded, those “unable or unwilling to adapt to the new methods” (Taylor 1913). Concerning the organization of production, the exemplary model of the disciplinary society is the *factory*. The discipline of the (Fordist) factory relies on *enclosure*. The strict separation between the inside and the outside is of the utmost importance. Factories were “fenced off like prisons” (Fleming/Spicer 2004: 78) and the boundaries between work and non-work, between company time and private time were relatively clear cut. A principle strategy in the exercise of power is immobilising workers in space through denying them the right to move and through routinization of the time rhythm they have to obey (Bauman 2001: 10). The “vocational employee” (Pongratz/Voß 2000), who obtains standardized and specialized work qualifications by means of systematic education, represents a historically new type of disciplined employee.

The background of the *post-disciplinary regime* has been articulated by Gilles Deleuze (1995) in his ‘Postscriptum’, where he noticed that the disciplines began to “break down as new forces moved slowly into place, then made rapid advances after the Second World War” (ibid.: 178). Zygmunt Bauman, who was obviously inspired by Deleuze in his book “Fluid Modernity” says: “Whatever else the present stage in the history of modernity is, it is also, perhaps above all, post-Panoptical” (Bauman 2001: 11). Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2002, 2003) describe the modulations in the “spirit of capitalism” from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (first spirit), to the “second spirit” (1940-1970) to the “third spirit”. They (ibid.: 2002: 6) characterize the “third spirit of capitalism” which they see emerging since the 1980s by new forms of the capital accumulation process (network firms, internet and biotech, global finance, varying and differentiated productions), new forms of mobilising the workforce (fuzzy organizations, innovation and creativity, permanent change, the questioning of authoritarian chiefs), a new understanding of fairness (new forms of meritocracy valuing mobility, ability to nourish a network, projects as opportunities to develop one’s employability) and a new understanding of “security” (based on the idea of self-management and self-responsibility rather than the idea of long-term planning, careers in the traditional sense and the welfare state).

In his ‘Postscriptum’ Deleuze (1995) noticed a general “breakdown of all sites of confinement” (ibid.: 178) that were characteristic for the disciplinary regime and a

fundamental transformation of the capitalist system. Prisons are experimenting with new forms of punishment that are cheaper and more efficient (e.g. the use of electronic tagging to force offenders to stay at home or control their movements), schools and universities are developing forms of “distance learning”, and production is organized outside the confined space of the factory.

Capitalism in its present form “is no longer directed toward production, which is often transferred to remote parts of the Third World .... It’s directed toward metaproduction. It no longer buys raw materials and no longer sells finished products: it buys finished products or assembles them from parts. What it seeks to sell is services, and what it seeks to buy, is activities. It’s a capitalism no longer directed toward production but toward products, that is toward sales or markets” (ibid.: 181). The prime orientation of enterprises is towards the market and the “needs of the customers”. In the previous regime the “imperatives of production” and the rational and efficient use and organization of given means of production were predominant. Nowadays, resources and means of production are assembled according to demands, whereby demands are themselves actively created, shaped and produced. In the new regime, the *market is becoming an organising principle*. It transforms individual and collective actors and favours a new mode of governing, which has been described as “entrepreneurial” (see e.g. du Gay 1996a, 1996b) or “neoliberal governmentality” (Bröckling et al. 2000; Foucault 2004; Rose 1991, 1992).

In the post-disciplinary regime we are entering the age of permanent reforms. “Reform”, rather than being an exception, is becoming a “way of life”. It seems to become a meta-imperative which demands the constant questioning of the rules and modes of organising the various social spheres. In industry, education, health care, in the public sector, and so on, the call for reforms is omnipresent (Deleuze 1995: 178). The fixed and stable “moulds” that were characteristic of the disciplinary regime are transformed into a condition of permanent *modulation*, which comprehends wages, markets, regimes of time, labour contracts and human beings alike. Societies of Control are characterized by conditions of “constant metastability” (ibid.: 179), which demands adaptability according to ever changing conditions: “Renew! Renew! Renew!” (Peters 1999: 149) is the battle-cry of the new regime.

In post-disciplinary regimes, the model of the factory is replaced by the model of “business” or “*enterprise*” which represents fundamentally different organizing principles. The difference between these two models has again been noted by Deleuze (1995: 179): “The factory was a body of men whose internal forces reached equilibrium between the highest possible production and the lowest possible wages; but in a control society businesses take over from factories, and a business is a soul, a gas.”

Whereas discipline establishes a set of fixed rules and imposes them, in post-disciplinary regimes “flexibility is the slogan of the day” (Bauman 2001: 147). Organizing work is no longer seen as an attempt to build stable and durable frames or grids in which “human factors” are positioned, administered and treated according to a set of pre-established rules, but rather as an ongoing attempt to form the work-organization as “an island of superior adaptability” (ibid.: 117).



In post-disciplinary regimes stable rules associated with bureaucracy are constructed as major obstacles in a dynamic environment (see e.g. Peters/Waterman 1982; critically du Gay 2000). Contemporary management discourse suggests that it is necessary to “thrive on chaos” (Peters 1987), to “ride the waves of change” (Peters 1987), and to “learn to dance” (Kanter 1990) rather than to create excessive and stable order. New philosophies of organization and management deliberately include disorganization as an element and announce that “madness is afoot” and “predictability is a thing of the past” (Peters 1987: 3, in: du Gay 2000: 63).

*Networks* and network-type organizations are increasingly constructed as the new model of success: “If the old model of organization was the large hierarchical firm, the model of organization that is considered characteristic for the New Competition is a network, of lateral and horizontal interlinkages within and among firms.” (Nohria 1992: 2) As the sociologist Walter Powell claims, one of the main advantages of network organizations is, that they “are lighter on their feet” and “more readily decomposable or redefinable than the fixed assets of hierarchies” (Powell/Smith-Dorr 1994: 381, in: Sennett 1998: 23). They appear to be more able to secure survival in a dynamic, competitive and ever changing environment.

Similarly, “loose coupling” (Weick 1969) is seen as an advantage rather than a lack of organization, “weak ties” (Granovetter 1973) are seen as strengths. Fleeting forms of association are constructed as being more useful than long-term connections. Improvisation, which traditionally has been constructed as the opposite of organization and planning, is increasingly seen as a mode of organising in its own right. It has attracted the attention of theorists and practitioners of organization in order to think of organising on the “spur of the moment” (Weick 2001: 285) and to “cope with discontinuity, interruptions, and transcient purposes that dissolve without warning” (ibid.: 297).

With the advent of networks the *boundaries* of organizations are themselves increasingly unclear and fuzzy. In contrast to the (relatively) stable arrangements of the factory which represents the classical model of integration/exclusion, in the dynamic constellation of the network inclusion/exclusion is a permanent process or struggle. The boundary turns into a “strategic zone” (Deleuze 1988), that is highly contested, as for example Fleming and Spicer (2004) showed in their study of a call-centre organization. Who and what belongs to the inside and what to the outside has to be constantly defined and redefined according to ever-changing requirements. The ambivalent position of being “betwixt and between” that has been well described by the example of temporary workers by Garsten (1999, see also Surman 2002) is characteristic for the new regime of work.

On the level of the state, programmes of neoliberal government promote *competition* as a way of transforming and revitalising society and its institutions. Whereas in the disciplinary regime, competition is organized within (a more or less) stable framework, in the regime of enterprise it takes on a different form. Ilinitch, D’Aveni and Lewin (1996) observed a “fundamental shift in the rules of competition and the way the game is played” (p. 211) and claim a paradigm shift from “static competition” to “dynamic competition” or even “hypercompetition”, which emerged

around the 1980s. A similar point has been diagnosed by Bauman who notes an universalization of the “competition for survival” and a self-propelling tendency.

The new form of competition, says Bauman “is not just the fate of the workers ... It penetrates the obsessively dieting and slimming company of light modernity from top to bottom. Managers must downsize worker-employing outfits to stay alive; top managers must downsize their managerial offices in order to earn the recognition of the stock-exchange, gain shareholders’ votes and secure the right to the golden handshake with the current round of hatchet jobs has been completed. ... The tendency becomes self-propelling and self-accelerating, and ... the original motive – increased efficiency – becomes irrelevant; the fears of loosing the competition game, of being overtaken, left behind or put out of business altogether are quite sufficient to keep the merging/downsizing game going” (Bauman 2001: 123).

Also, in post-disciplinary regimes, lateral *communication* rather than being interrupted is actively promoted. Iain Munro (2000, 2005) has described the impact of information technologies on the formation of a new diagram of power that he calls ‘network power’. This form of power supplements and in part changes disciplinary forms of power that are dominant in the disciplinary regime. A network consists of a number of *interconnected nodes*. In contrast to the positions in the Panopticon (confined cells), the nodes of the network are open and changeable. The Panopticon worked by cutting off communication between the different points. In this way it made sure that the central point had complete mastery over the information. In contrast, “the network promotes lateral communication and ‘informs’ those who are under surveillance” (Munro 2000: 690).

In the network there is no single centre of power, rather power is distributed to multiple nodes, in which information, resources, etc. come together or are connected. In principle at least the network allows any point to be connected to any other. Those in the network are not subjected to hierarchical visibility in the same way as the inmates of the Panopticon. In the network the *control of flows* (e.g. of information, resources, money) and the establishing of rules of access are important. Control is exercised by technologies, which permit locating the mobile producer in the open field. In today’s world of work this is particularly obvious e.g. in tele-work or in service-work, where for example the technicians of a company who make repairs or technical service in private homes or in companies, are connected to the company via internet, mobile-phones or can even be detected with JPS-systems and the like. At any time then, in principle, it is possible for the employer to locate the technician and control his or her movements (see e.g. Ball/Wilson 2000; Cairns/McInnes/Roberts 2003; Castells 2000).

The transformations associated with information technologies are far reaching as they also modify the conceptualization and experience of time and space. New technologies allow for organising work and services independently of space. The enclosed space of the factory which was paradigmatic for the disciplinary regime is modified to an open space of the network or the “space of flows” (Castells 2003: 56) that is “based on telecommunications, computer systems and the places from where this interaction takes place” (ibid.). Work may be distributed to local workstations that are connected by information technology. Geographical distance and co-presence of bodies

is becoming irrelevant with information technologies. Deterritorialized forms of work, like tele-working and home-working are examples of this tendency (Bocklehurst 2001).

The disciplinary model of “lock up” (Foucault 1977: 196) which ensured the presence of workers is more and more replaced by a temporary “log in” that we know from computer-systems. With the “advent of software capitalism” (Bauman 2001: 116) the computer terminal or work-station represents the vanishing line or model of the space of work. Here you *log in* and *log out* when the job is done. You do the next job, without necessarily being integrated into a “community” in the traditional sense. “Virtual communities” that make it possible to build multiple weak ties and shifting identities may be a paradigm case (Garsten 1999: 611-615; see also Bauman 1992). For prophets of the “new economy”, “independent contractors” are even the “fundamental unit of the new economy”: “These electronically connected freelancers – e-lancers – join together in fluid, temporary networks to produce and sell goods and services. When the job is done, the network dissolves and its members become independent agents again, circulating through the economy, seeking the next assignment.” (Malone/Laubacher 1998, in: Peters 1999: vii)

In the confined space of the factory regime the boundaries are more or less stable and clearly mark the territory. Office and home, workspace and private space are clearly separated. In contrast, in post-disciplinary regimes work is increasingly “spatially diffuse [*ortsdiffus*]” (Beck 1986: 225). In many cases it could be done anywhere. You take your computer-laptop with you to any place you like, you “log in” and you are there even if you are not there. The important thing in post-disciplinary regime is to *get access* (e.g. to systems, information, resources, but also to contacts etc.). “Access denied” signals the missing password.

“Lock-ups” that are created by long-term employment bind individuals to the employing organization and provide them with an ambivalent security. They provide protection on the one hand, but create dependency and a pressure to assimilate on the other hand. Careers as a sequence of stages marked in advance and accompanied by fairly clear conditions of entry and advancement provided employees with orientation. It was more or less predictable where one would end if one worked according to the defined rules and conditions. Predictable career paths bind employees to the employing organization, make possible long-term perspectives, encourage settlement and promote a sedentary lifestyle. “Whoever begins a career at Microsoft has not the slightest idea where it will end. Whoever started it at Ford or Renault could be well-nigh certain that it will finish in the same place” (Cohen 1997: 84, in: Bauman 2001: 116).

The disciplinary regime was essentially “anti-nomadic” (Foucault 1977: 218). Organizational membership, long-term contracts, defined places and marked stages of development incorporate the modern ideal of settledness. In the post-disciplinary regime we witness a “revenge of nomadism over the principle of territoriality and settlement” (Bauman 2001: 13).

Nomad-like styles of living and working are more and more reframed from a threat to order into a necessity to survive in a dynamic economy. Contemporary forms of nomadism in the world of work take on variety of forms: it seems that there is a new elite, who travels from one headquarters to the next, from one meeting to the

other etc. “Freelancers” and “E-lancers” and other “Job-nomads” (Floeting/Henckel 2003) are constantly on the move. Workers and employees who are either extremely well or extremely low paid are mobile or mobilized: Directors, executives, senior managers of big companies on the one hand and a mass of unemployed who are forced to move and give up the ideal of sedentariness on the other hand (Ladewig/Mellinger 2003).

The “frozen time of the factory regime” (Bauman 2001: 116), which was a key both to control and routinisation (disciplining) of behaviour, loses much of its importance. Bauman notes: “Once distances can be spanned (and so the materially distant parts of space acted upon and affected) with the velocity of electronic signals” (ibid.: 117) the experience and significance of time changes fundamentally. In the post-disciplinary regime and the “Era of the instantaneity” *JIT* is a major signature mark: “just-in-time labor” (Lash/Urry 1994) and just-in-time production join.

It is the instant, the moment which has top priority. “Old values” like constancy and stability are considered inadequate, untimely and “out of fashion”. The short-term has displaced the long-term, decisions have to be made in “real time”, “skilled labor is required to manage its own time in a flexible manner, sometimes adding more work time, at other times adjusting to flexible schedules, in some instances reducing working hours, and thus pay” (Castells 2000: 468).

In the disciplinary regime the “focus ... is on the selection and subsequent moulding of employees who fit some more or less explicit model of the ideal worker, who is a worker who is not only obedient but is willing to modify behaviour which managers might define as deviant, and thereby to symbolise submission to control” (Jackson/Carter 1998: 57). In a world made up of networks and flexible organizations the conditions of normalization change dramatically. There is no single model of the ideal worker which serves as a standard model and provides a relatively stable identity. Rather the worker or working subject is confronted with multiple images which are constructed by different clients or contracting bodies from various and often conflicting discourses. There is still a normalising pressure. However, normalization itself takes a new form. “Flexible normalism” (Link 1998) which requires adapting to multiple and changing norms seems to be characteristic. Adaptability and openness is itself becoming a meta-norm, which requires “fitness”<sup>2</sup> rather than docility. Even though specialist qualifications are still important, the willingness and ability to adjust to changing requirements represents a sort of meta-qualification.

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<sup>2</sup> Whereas “docility” refers to stable moulds of discipline, “fitness” refers to the metastability of post-disciplinary regimes: “The state of fitness ... is anything but ‘solid’; it cannot by its nature be pinned down and circumscribed with precision. ... ‘being fit’ means to have a flexible, absorptive and adjustable body, ready to live through sensations not yet tried and impossible to specify in advance. ... fitness stays permanently open to the side of ‘more’: it does not refer to any particular standard of bodily capacity, but to its (preferable unlimited) potential for expansion. ‘Fitness’ means being ready to take in the unusual, the non-routine, the extraordinary – and above all the novel and surprising” (Bauman 2001: 78).

The “ideal worker” (Jackson/Carter 1998) is itself a heterogeneous multiplicity. It does not, like the mole<sup>3</sup>, make arrangements for long-term habitation and residence. Rather, like the snake s/he is adaptable, willing and able to modify its appearance, stripping off and building up a new skin according to changing conditions in temporary projects. His or her ability to coil up and wind allows him or her to move at ease between different networks and network-positions, without holding too tightly to one specific project or position. Furthermore, s/he communicates on multiple levels and engages in a variety of “projects”, which are per definition short-term (see Boltanski/Chiapello 2002, 2003). In his or her appearance s/he symbolises openness to change and transformation and readiness to move through network-positions rather than “submission to control” (Jackson/Carter 1998: 57). S/he is able to react in a flexible manner to the ever changing demands and requirements. S/he is, furthermore, willing and able to take “self-responsibility” for her own development. In a sense we can say the mode of individualization is modified again. The individual (as the un-dividable) is divided in so many parts that it might be called “dividual” (Kallinikos 2003: 601). The post-disciplinary regime which requires the ability to actualize and mobilize in a piecemeal fashion various segments of the self according to the demands raised in various “projects” calls for permanent modulation. In this regime people necessarily have to be and understand themselves as polyvalent resources rather than as specialists employable only in strictly defined fields or tasks (Boltanski/Chiapello 2002: 10; 2003: 500).

Table 1 summarizes the main points and shows the main characteristics of the three regimes that we have outlined in this section. This gives us some clarity on the significance of ongoing transformations. However, it is absolutely imperative to be aware that this is not a model of development where we simply leave previous forms of power for example behind. We would see this more as a spiral-like movement in which what has been before is implicated in present, rather than simply replaced. Outlining the form of rationality that is immanent in these regimes gives us a clearer picture about the context in which contemporary subjectification takes place.

### 3. Technologies of modulation

Any regime depends on “appropriate individuals” (Alvesson/Willmott 2001) for its own reproduction. This is not given but rather has to be produced by technologies of power/knowledge. In this part of the paper we focus on *how* the flexible and governable subject demanded by the post-disciplinary regime is produced. “Production” in the sense we use the term, is neither to be understood as a technical process nor as a passive submission to regimes in which “standardized products of some discourse formation – as individual copies ... are mechanically punched out” (Habermas 1994: 104). Rather, it should be seen as a complex process, in which technologies of power which “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject” (Foucault 1988: 18) interplay with “technologies of the self”. These “permit individuals to effect by their

<sup>3</sup> “moles are the animals you get in places of confinement ... control societies have their snakes” (Deleuze 1995: 180).

**Table 1**

Regime	Sovereign	Disciplinary	Post-disciplinary
Model	-	factory	enterprise
Strategy	levy-violence  threat of exclusion/ punishment	normalization  integration/exclusion	mobilization flexible normalism permanent inclusion/ exclusion multiple and partial inclusions
Worker/ workforce	repressed exploited mass proletarian worker of early industrialization tortured body	productive fixed, focused “occupational employee”  disciplined, docile body	hyper-productive mobile, scattered highly individualized “entrepreneur of the self”  motile, fit body
Paradigmatic techniques	command	disciplines as “techniques for making useful individuals” “dressage” (the panopticon – visual surveillance) “impose exercises” (moulding individuals) The examination	information technologies, free-floating control  control of flows (the panspectron – data surveillance)  permanent assessment
Space	occupied	divided confined cells “lock up”	connected nodes (stations) fluid space (temporary) “log in”
Time	sporadic interventions	linear time routinized time timetable	global “real time” (JIT, flexitime) “era of instantaneousness”
Communication	one-way/ top-down command	passive objects of information interruption and cutting off of lateral communication	lateral communication (“networking”) immediate communication
Employment Relationship	ad-hoc hire and fire	long-term fix, stable (career model)	short-term uncertainty/flexibility (project engagements)
Individualization	ascending	descending	dividualization

own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (ibid.).

Each model of self-hood that is constructed and/or imposed requires a certain form of self-crafting. It requires an active engagement of the subject to be formed and governed (see Rose/Rabinow 2003: xxi). Identities that are discursively constructed (Rose/Miller 1995) require “identity work” (Alvesson/Willmott 2001) and can



therefore never be fully regulated and determined. As Deleuze says with Foucault: “there will always be a relation to oneself which resists codes and powers” (Deleuze 1995: 103).

In the following we exemplarily describe five strategies of producing the post-disciplinary subject. Each is a specific interaction of technologies that objectify the individual and technologies that bring individuals to work on themselves in relation to truth discourses, by means of practices of the self and in the name of individual or collective life. In this sense we discuss the technologies of responsabilization, of contractualization, the reconstruction of job-security and careers in terms of employability, the creation of competition and rivalry as well as the technology of flexibility. These technologies, which must not be considered as existing separately, all illustrate the subtle shift in emphasis from “moulding the productive subject” (Townley 1994: 132) in the disciplinary regime to modulation in the post-disciplinary regime.

The *technology of responsabilization* creates individual units that are responsible for carrying out a task and reaching predefined goals. Individuals are given more choice or discretion in the way they carry out the work and are held accountable for the results – especially in the case of failure. Responsibilization is presented as “empowering”, since individuals are no longer seen as passive and patronized. The discourse of empowerment communicates to the individual “you are no longer dependent and simply executing orders, but an autonomous agent able to act and decide on your own”. Simultaneously the technology attempts to establish a framework of cultural values which defines what is meant by acting in a responsible way and “in which practical autonomy takes place routinely” (Peters/Waterman 1982: 323, quoted in Knights/Willmott 2002: 70).

Responsibilization brings individuals closer to the various clients (or customers) and makes their demands immediately their own personal concern. As a governmental strategy it mobilizes the “freedom” and subjectivity of those “empowered”. It creates “(self)responsible” subjects who value it positively to build resources in themselves, who reject relying on others and do not expect others to take risks and uncertainties on their behalf (du Gay 1996a: 183). By encouraging employees to make the aims of government their own, the strategy aligns individual and organizational rationalities (Rose 1992; Opitz 2004). The technology of responsabilization employs an ethical vocabulary and allows objectifying individuals in these categories. In this way it creates a new field of visibility and makes it possible to categorize and classify individuals in a new way. Those who do not come up to the requirements or meet the targets can be classified as “irresponsible” and thus morally dubious (and: who wants to be “irresponsible”?). Simultaneously by instilling reflexive self-monitoring and encouraging subjects to make the gaze of the other one’s own, the technology subjectifies. To the degree that criteria set up by others are taken as a measure of one’s own value and self-worth responsabilization produces self-discipline and reconstitutes subjectivity. The responsible subject has to be perpetually responsive and open to changing – and often conflicting – demands and expectations that result from the modifications in its environment (Gordon 1991: 43). The strategy of responsabilization thus capitalizes on the moral consciousness and mobilizes more

intimate resources of subjectivity. The language of (self-)responsibility and self-advancement further tends to wear away the difference between offender and victim. These categories are no longer clear cut, since any “victim” has done damage to him or herself. There is no one to blame since those who are failing are not able to act in a (self)responsible way and lack the capacity to care for themselves. The effectiveness of this technology relies on accentuating both the gain in individual freedom, scopes and autonomous decision-making and in stigmatising the “irresponsible ones”.

Closely related is the *technology of contractualization* that has been identified e.g. by du Gay (1996b, du Gay et. al. 1996) as a major strategy of enterprising up the public sector. This strategy, which involves the reconstruction of social relations – not just in the field of work – in terms of “contract” is fundamentally reconstituting the working subject. With respect to employment this technology transforms classical relationships of “status” (long-term relationships associated with the philosophy of treating employees as investment rather than cost) into ones, in which renewal or termination of the employment relation is dependent on continuous measures of performance. The technology promises to replace traditional relations of command and control by agreements on targets and provision of services. The employee is reconstructed as “hired help” (Edwards 2003: 24) who has to prove the value of this “help” continuously.

The technology of contractualization requires that individuals develop a specific relation to themselves and to others. In this way it creates a new mode of being, including increasing self-control and self-discipline. This technology transforms traditional employees into “entrepreneurs of themselves” (du Gay 1996a) who have to manage relations to themselves and others in economic categories. It splits and doubles individuals into bundles of capabilities on the one hand and (self-)managers who are able to employ these capabilities in an effective way on the other hand (Bröckling 2004: 136). In this way it makes them up as “little businesses” (ibid.) or profit-centres that (ideally) take it for granted that they will be continuously assessed according the value they deliver.

Contractualization also includes uncertainty as an essential element of the employment relation and increases the competitive pressure. In contrast to the discontinuous marking of the individual in terms of good/bad in the classical examination, continuous assessment institutionalizes the market as a “permanent economic tribunal” (Foucault 2004: 340). In this tribunal “good and bad” are dynamic categories rather than fixed and stable ones. According to the changing conditions of the market the individual has to calculate and to be aware, that a good “report” can be a bad one the next day. In order not to be excluded and pushed out by the anonymous forces of the market individuals have to work on their own self-optimization continuously.

The reconstruction of careers and job-security in terms of “*employability*” is a related technology. It has become popular and particularly accepted in the fields traditionally known for their flexibility – like for example the so called Creative Industries (see eg. Caves 2000; Haunschild 2003; Studie CI 2004). As Bauman (2001) noticed, in the “fluid modernity” the notion of careers as a “sequence of stages marked in advance and accompanied by moderately clear conditions of entry and rules

of admission” (p. 116) seems to be “nebulous and utterly out of place” (p. 117). Career, as a step-by-step advancement or ascent on a relatively stable ladder often turns into an “unending sprint from one project to the next” (Kanter 1990). Employability as a governmental technology introduces a double effect. Firstly, it produces objectifying effects by creating a new field of visibility (e.g. the particular stage of the individual employability is documented in the application papers). Individuals are constructed as bundles of competencies which have to be acquired and built up in a series of projects. Secondly, as a technology the notion of employability reframes the uncertainty given in short-term engagements in an effective way: Uncertainty is presented as a challenge rather than a threat. In this conception, “each project is an opportunity to make many new acquaintances, and it therefore offers people the chance to earn a solid reputation and to be co-opted into a new activity. Moreover, given that each project, by definition, is different, new and innovative in nature, it can be presented as an opportunity for learning and for adding to one’s own competencies – this being an advantage in finding other engagements” (Boltanski/Chiapello 2002: 25).

Employability as a technology creates new realities. It does not simply “describe” (ibid.) an ability rather it *prescribes* it and reframes the self-perception of individuals. It encourages individuals to “take care for themselves” and understand themselves as “autonomous” and “free-choosing” agents of their own self-advancement. The transition from one project to the next is constructed as “a personal capital that each individual has to manage in his/her own way” (ibid.). The notion of employability mobilizes energies of the individual who has to demonstrate his or her ability to move from one project to the next, according to the particular requirements of the market. It further calls the individual to internalize the tensions inherent in the network world of projects and accept the related requirements (e.g. to demonstrate commitment and passion for one project *and* at the same time to save disposability for the next, to be unique *and* adaptable, to be involved *and* to have an eye elsewhere) as quasi-natural.

*Creating competition and rivalry* between individuals or individual units (e.g. teams) is another strategy that mobilizes individuals and keeps them “running” for ever in search of competitive advantages. As Deleuze noticed businesses “are constantly introducing an inexorable rivalry presented as healthy competition, a wonderful motivation that sets individuals against one another and sets itself up in each of them, dividing each within himself” (Deleuze 1995: 179). This seems to be an almost universal strategy that promises to “revitalize” organizations and whole societies. Particularly in the public sector, in universities this has been a major strategy that has characterized reforms in perhaps, the last two decades. The vocabulary employed for this purpose promises to keep organizations and their members “fit” and “slim” (Fach 2000), to inspire creative and innovative behaviour, and to deliver results suited to the demands of customers. The technology splits and divides individual units (individuals, teams, etc.) from each other and within themselves and at the same time seeks to integrate them into a belief system, which suggests that this mode of organising social relations will be to the best of all (“win-win-situations”).

Setting up competition between teams and incorporating the strivings of the individual into the activities of the team may further strengthen the technology. In the

post-disciplinary context “It’s teamtime” (Breisig 1990) almost all of the time and anywhere. In the context of work organizations teams are created as islands of intensive immediate communication. It creates the requirements of flexibility, adaptability, self-discipline and -control, engagement of the individual and sometimes it creates the impression of effective participation that increases commitment. Internally, the team members control each other. Externally they are directed by context control, i.e. by framing the working conditions of the team. Teams not only institutionalize mutual observation and (peer)pressure (Barker 1993, 1999). The team also operationalizes the call for modulation, since it institutionalizes the pressure for constant improvement (see also Opitz 2004: 130-1).

As David Knights (1990: 321) put it: “... as competition for material [and symbolic] benefits and rewards increases, so identity, self-worth or confirmation of our own significance also becomes more problematic and precarious”. (Project-) Teams create a space of immediate contact and communication. For the individual they may become central instance, in which the construction and confirmation of identity is generated. Teams may also institutionalize a pastoral setting (Foucault 1983) which encourages the members of the team to be open and to confess weaknesses. The team provides a precarious release from the tensions generated by the competitive setting and further offers the opportunity to identify with the team’s values (see e.g. Casey 1995). The confession<sup>4</sup> of individual failures binds the individual to the identity created and confirmed by the team. In this way, the team structure also creates strong dependencies, since confirmation of identity always contains the possibility of being deprived of it. In this sense teams supplement the technology of competition and make it more efficient.

*Flexibility* has become a “management mantra” (Guest 2004: 1) and “a catch-all label to describe on-going efforts to optimize labour utilisation, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in pursuit of competitive advantage” (Legge 1995: 155). The label of flexibility is ambiguous and opaque; it allows a variety of controversial requirements and expectations to melt. With respect to the relationship between the organization and the individual flexibility can mean a sort of “freedom” which promises initiative, spontaneity and non-rigid structures. On the other hand flexibility refers to the necessity to be at the employer’s beck and call. This makes it hard to identify the “system of power that lurks in modern forms of flexibility” (Sennett 1998: 59). To some extent, the effectiveness of the technology can be ascribed exactly to this ambiguity. As Karen Legge notes, language “may also mask behaviour. Not only can negative ‘uncertainties’ be translated into positive ‘flexibilities’ (...) Backgrounded are some of the negative overtones of flexibility (uncertainty): loss of specialist skills, loss of quality, lack of ‘ownership’ and so forth” (Legge 1995: 172).

To the degree that practices of flexibility are unilateral they create uncertainty and dependency on the side of those exposed to the imperative of flexibility. As Bauman noticed, “uncertainty is a powerful individualising force. It divides instead of uniting, and since there is no telling who will wake up the next day in what division, the idea of

<sup>4</sup> „Confession ... is a diagram of a certain form of subjectification that binds us to others at the very moment we affirm our identity“ (Rose 1991: 240).

‘common interests’ grows ever more nebulous and loses all pragmatic value” (p. 148). Uncertainty is created for example by short term contracts and flexible work arrangements that unilaterally define the possibilities of specifying the temporal and spatial conditions of work. According to Sennett, these “practices of flexibility focus mostly on the forces *bending* people” (ibid.: 46, emphasis added). For Sennett one of the most disturbing aspects of the flexibility-imperative is its corrosive impact on the personal character, which in his opinion is expressed by loyalty, mutual commitment, stable values or the pursuit of long-term goals or the practice of delayed gratification for the sake of future ends (ibid.: 10).

As a governmental technology the (managerial) discourse, attempting to “describe” organizations in metaphors that problematize and devalue stable organizations as being “out of date”, “old fashioned”, “rigid”, etc. legitimizes new forms of structuring organizations and creates new ways for people to see and understand themselves. “Non-flexible” individuals can easily be seen and classified as resistant to innovation and change, as reluctant, obstinate, and set in their ways. The language and discourse of flexibility is also a powerful subjectifying force. It is a way of “changing people’s attitude towards change” (Danzelot 1991: 273) and opening them up to the idea of a “continuous process of retraining, from the cradle to the grave” (ibid.). At the same time the strategy attempts “to provide the individual with a feeling of autonomy in relation to work” (ibid.).

#### 4. Concluding remarks and lines of flight

In this paper we have drawn on the conceptual work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze in order to demonstrate paradigmatic shifts in the organization of work and their effects on the relations to self and others. We have illustrated these shifts by explicating three distinct “regimes of work”. The concept of the “regime” has allowed us to connect various and heterogeneous elements that have often been discussed separately.

We then have focused on strategies and practices we think are characteristic for the “post-disciplinary regime”. These technologies illustrate the interplay of technologies of governing with technologies of the self. They further illustrate the subtle shift from “moulding the productive subject” (Townley 1994: 132) in the disciplinary regime, to the modulation in the post-disciplinary regime.

With respect to the contemporary discussion of individualization, our analysis leads us beyond the dualism of *either* more power *or* more freedom that seems to connect *and* divide evaluations of concepts and strategies of individualization in the organization and management of work.

The post-disciplinary regime creates both: the possibilities of enhanced subjection/subjugation but also new and increased possibilities of self-creation; it creates the necessity of cooperation *and* the necessity of competition and rivalry. It enhances the possibilities of self-creation *and* distributes them in an unequal way. Deregulation reduces security *and* allows a greater variety of work arrangements in which we are “obliged to be free” (Rose 1991: 213). Project-based forms of work open up possibilities of a broader range of experiences and relations *and* reduce the predictability of income and patterns of life and work (see also Garsten 1999;

Moldaschl 2002: 263 ff; Pongratz/Voß 2000, Storey et. al. 2005). These ambivalences are irreducible. Consequently it is "... not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there is a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us" (Deleuze 1995: 178).

These ambivalences are also mirrored in the *process of subjectification*, which contains both the possibilities of subjugation and self-creation. In his later works, Foucault (e.g. 1983, 1986, 1988, 1997) envisioned the possibility of self-creation, allowing one to distance or detach oneself from established regimes without being blinded to dependencies and relations of power by the illusion of autonomy. Subjectification always takes place *within* a (historical) social formation and within relations of power/knowledge. Even if we consider that and "how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self" (Foucault 1997: 291) we have to consider, that "these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he [sic!] finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (ibid.). The normative models of acting and being which are discursively generated have to be related to and *folded back* to the particularities of one's own life and history. As Deleuze says: "[s]ubjectivation is created by folding" (Deleuze 1988: 104).

The "caring of the self" and the attempt to "make one's life into a work of art" which Foucault (1986, 1997) considered in his works provide a possible line of flight that emphasizes the productive and creative possibilities within a social formation. A modified version of this concept has now largely been integrated into the post-disciplinary regime. Here it has become a social duty and discursive strategy which seduces us to (mis)understand ourselves as "autonomous" and "independent" agents. As long as the care of self is seen as a purely individual and individualized activity it is likely that it will reproduce power-relations and simply bind individuals closer to the hegemonic identities, like the "entrepreneur of the self" (du Gay 1996a: 181) who understands himself or herself as an autonomous, choosing subject and sees the project of shaping his or her life as a purely instrumental exercise to optimize the worth of his or her own existence.

In contrast, the care of the self, as it was conceived by Foucault, implies complex relationships – engagements, exchanges, and communications – with others (Foucault 1997: 287). It must be understood as a social practice of intensifying social relations rather than an isolated and isolating form. In this sense, it is a form of resistance to a "government of individualization" (Foucault 1983: 211-2) that "separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way" (ibid.). In a positive sense, subjectification is "... about creating ways of existing, what Nietzsche called inventing new possibilities of life" (Deleuze 1995: 118).

The shift to more fluid relations in the post-disciplinary regime opens up possibilities of creating new relations to oneself and others. The concept of the care of the self might attain a new relevance, since it refers to the necessity of active work on oneself and on one's relations to others and thereby to "give form" (Rabinow 1997: xxx) to one's life. This seems particularly important in contexts where relations and



encounters may be singular, superficial and ephemeral.<sup>5</sup> Repetition of encounters is a necessary condition for building up relations and a social background that provides possibilities of anchoring and affords hold. It may work as a shield against the dangers of social isolation and help to “establish an endurable zone in which to install ourselves, confront things, take hold, breath” (Deleuze 1995: 111).

As we have said, the *creation of new forms or modes of organizing life* must not be seen as a purely individual undertaking. Rather, it demands new forms of solidarity which have to be *created and invented*. Foucault does not provide any “programme” to be followed. However, what Paul Rabinow, one of Foucault’s close friends and interpreters said in a different context might be taken as a general attitude that creates a line of flight. “Why not imagine new practices (and eventually new forms of law) that were not restricted to individual rights but began from a premise of giving new forms to relational activities?” (Rabinow 1997: xxxviii) It is beyond the scope of this paper to speculate on what these practices and forms might look like. Meanwhile it could be enough to start “in the middle” – here and now – and to try it out: This is already complicated enough and as intricate as a snake’s coils.

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<sup>5</sup> The empirical exploration of emergent forms of organizing social relations is an important part of the above mentioned research project (see footnote 2).

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